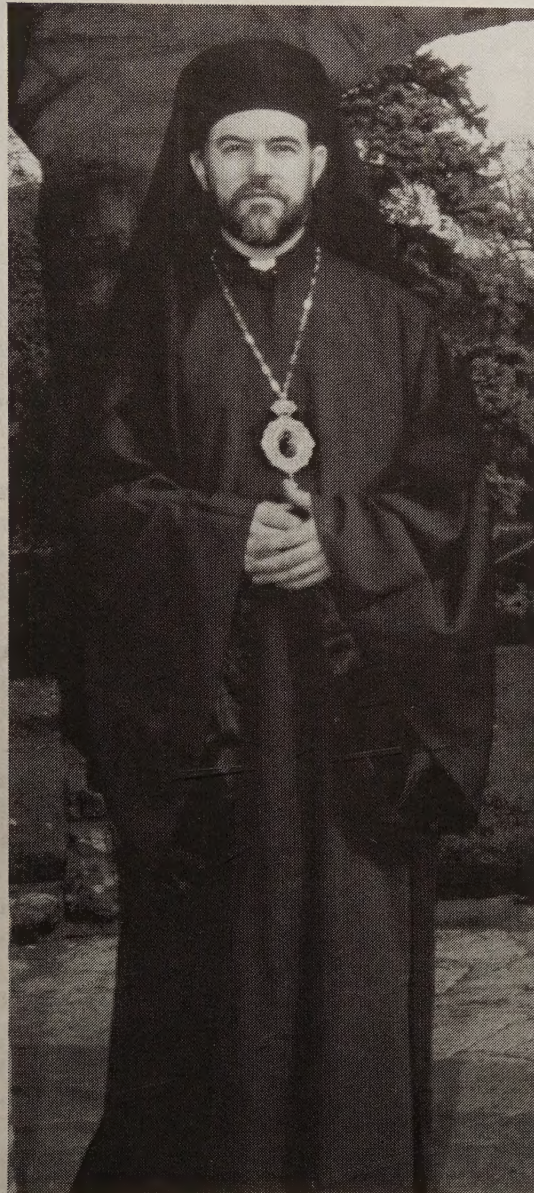


WELCOME TO THE 68TH ANNUAL
CHURCH CONGRESS
JUNE 29 - JULY 2, 2000

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CELEBRATING

The establishment of the Archbishop's Charity Endowment

*60th Birthday of Archbishop Nathaniel
and the 20th year of his Consecration as a
Hierarch of the Diocese*

65 Years of SOLIA - THE HERALD

65th Anniversary of the Enthronement of Bishop Policarp

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ENGLISH EDITOR /
SECRETARY:
Rev. Deacon David Oancea

ROMANIAN EDITOR:
Rev. Fr. Anton Frunză

CHAIRMAN:
Most Rev. Archbishop
Nathaniel Popp



STAFF:
Mr. Mark Chestnut

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LETTER FROM THE ROMANIAN PATRIARCHATE

April 27, 2000

His Eminence, Most Reverend Archbishop
NATHANIEL,

Your Eminence,

We rejoice that you responded with love to our
appeal for assistance to the urgent social program "To-
gether with the Victims of the Catastrophic Floods
during Holy Pascha," the purpose of which is to help
more than 5,000 families whose homes were totally
destroyed or severely damaged by the fury of the waters.

We received the donation of \$5,000 sent by Your
Eminence, a sum which will be combined with what
has been collected by the Romanian Patriarchate and
which will benefit families which have suffered the
greatest losses from among the parishes identified by
local hierarchs of the areas affected by the disaster.

We thank you for the donation given to help the
victims of the floods, and we wish Your Eminence
health, rich fruits in your pastoral mission and a blessed
Pascha.

With a brotherly embrace in Christ,

+ TEOCTIST

Patriarch of the Orthodox Church in Romania

IN MEMORY

The Most Reverend Archbishop SYLVESTER,
a retired hierarch of the
Orthodox Church in America,
fell asleep in the Lord on May 18, 2000.

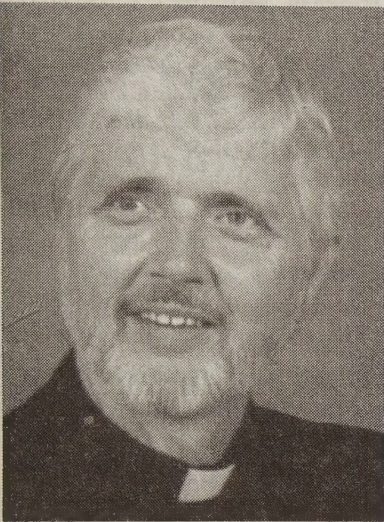
The Most Blessed Metropolitan NESTOR,
a hierarch of the Orthodox Church in Romania
and ruling bishop of the Archdiocese of Craiova,
fell asleep in the Lord on May 17, 2000.

May our risen Lord Jesus Christ
give them rest with the saints!

CONGRESS 2000 PROGRAM

"Equipping the Saints for Harvest"

"Is Christ's Great Commission Still For Us?"



Fr. Gordon Walker

Delegates to the 68th Congress will participate in workshops and hear guest speakers as part of the 2000 Congress Program. In addition to reviewing the reports from the Episcopate Council, delegates will take part in discussions and hear from speakers who will exhort the clergy and faithful of the Diocese to share the Good News with others, encourage them to

share their material talents and financial blessings and be open to the prompting of the Holy Spirit.

Leading the discussion-workshops on mission outreach and parish growth will be **The Very Reverend Gordon Thomas Walker, B.A., M. Div., Dr. Min.**, serving full time as a member of "New Church Development" with the Department of Missions and Evangelism for the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese. He is Pastor Emeritus of St. Ignatius Orthodox Church near Nashville, Tennessee, which he and his wife first began in 1972. He was elevated to the rank of Archpriest by Metropolitan Philip (Saliba) in 1987.

From 1952-63, Fr. Gordon served as pastor in various Baptist churches in Alabama, Texas, California and Ohio. He worked in the field of evangelism and missions during the period 1963-1968 as the Ohio Director for Campus Crusade for Christ. He also served as Coordinator of African Affairs for Campus Crusade, traveling widely on the African Continent.

In 1968, he and his wife moved to Mansfield, Ohio founding a church and the Grace Haven Ministry Center. They moved to Nashville, Tennessee in 1972 and founded a church and Bible teaching ministry. A year later, he became a member of a group of ministers studying the Apostolic Fathers, early Church History and theology. In time, the Evangelical Orthodox Church, which was founded in 1979, was received into the Antiochian Archdiocese in 1987. Father Walker also served as Professor of Bible and Theology at St. Athanasius Academy of Orthodox Theology in Goleta, California from 1979-1982.

Rev. Fr. James Kyriakakis, Director of Development for International Orthodox Christian Charities (IOCC), will speak about the work of this organiza-

tion which enjoys the dedicated service of hundreds of Orthodox volunteers throughout the United States in its ministry to the poor around the world. As the humanitarian aid agency of Orthodox Christians, IOCC has witnessed the reality of achieving the impossible take root and grow in countries around the world where people are in need of our help.

IOCC has just established an office in Bucharest and has been given a church by the Patriarchate to serve the needs of English-speaking Orthodox in the capital. IOCC will help the orphans and seniors in various institutions in Romania.

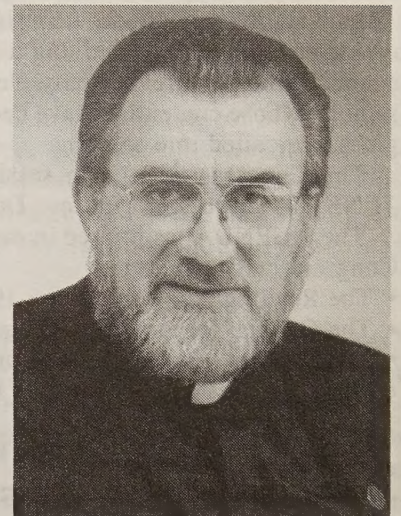
Fr. James holds a M.Th. from Duke University, B.Th. Hellenic College/Holy Cross. He was ordained in 1963. He and his wife Sofia have two children and three grandchildren. His expertise includes grant proposal research and writing and working with the hierarchy, Orthodox leaders and IOCC. He is credited with establishing the largest Mental Retardation Service Delivery System in North Carolina, a program that won national recognition for quality, innovation and scope.

Craig and Victoria Goodwin and their three children have been missionaries of the Orthodox Christian Mission Center (OCMC) working in Cluj-Napoca for two years. With the help of OCMC, they have rebuilt the 200 year-old St. Nicholas Children's Home in Nadaselu which was opened recently to become a home for girls and boys. Four nuns from Remitz monastery will become house-mothers for the children. The Goodwins will speak both about the OCMC and their work in Romania.

A presentation by **Mr. Bill Mason**, Senior Long Term Care Specialist, General Electric Capital Assurance Company, will encourage clergy and laity to consider long term care insurance.

SPECIAL EVENTS: After each day of the Congress Sessions, we will celebrate certain events. On Friday, the 65th Anniversary of the publishing of SOLIA will be featured. A "Broadway Musical Gala" themed on SOLIA will feature vocal, choral and in-

Cont. on page 4



Fr. James Kyriakakis

CONVOCATION

In conformity with Article III, Section 7, of the Episcopal By-Laws, we hereby call into session

THE 68TH ANNUAL CHURCH CONGRESS

THURS., JUNE 29 - SUN., JULY 2, 2000

All priests presently serving a parish and all lay delegates in the Congress legally elected by the parish assembly, whose credentials have been verified by the Congress, are called into session.

The Congress will be in session starting **FRIDAY, JUNE 30, 10:00 a.m.**, Eastern Daylight Savings Time.

The AGENDA, as printed in the Annual Report to the Congress, will include:

- The Reading/Approval of the 1999 Congress Minutes
- The Official Reports to the Congress
- The Reports from the Episcopate's Auxiliaries
- New Business as submitted by the parishes and/or the Episcopate Council.

+NATHANIEL, Archbishop

CHURCH CONGRESS PROGRAM

THURSDAY, JUNE 29

- 8:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy
- 9:00 a.m. Clergy Conference
- 1:00 p.m. Lunch
- 2:00 p.m. Conference Reconvenes
- 5:00 p.m. Vespers & Sermons
- 7:00 p.m. Supper
- 8:00 p.m. Episcopate Council Meeting

FRIDAY, JUNE 30

- 8:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy
- 9:00 a.m. Registration
- 10:00 a.m. Invocation to the Holy Spirit
68th Congress Convenes
- 1:00 p.m. Lunch
- 2:00 p.m. Congress Reconvenes II
- 5:00 p.m. Vespers & Sermons
- 7:00 p.m. Supper
- 8:00 p.m. Program celebrating 65 years of SOLIA

SATURDAY, JULY 1

- 8:00 a.m. Divine Liturgy
- 9:30 a.m. Congress Reconvenes III
- 1:00 p.m. Lunch
- 1:30 p.m. Thanksgiving Service for new millennium
- 2:00 p.m. Congress Reconvenes IV
- 5:00 p.m. Great Vespers & Sermons
- 7:00 p.m. Supper
- 8:00 p.m. Program celebrating 65th anniversary of Enthronement of Bishop Policarp & Dance

SUNDAY, JULY 2

- 8:30 a.m. Matins
- 9:30 a.m. Procession
- 10:00 a.m. Hierarchal Divine Liturgy
- 1:00 p.m. Congress Banquet & Program celebrating 60th birthday of Archbishop Nathaniel

Host Parish:

St. Mary, Elmhurst, New York

FINANCIAL REPORT

EPISCOPATE SUPPORTERS

Dr. Stelian Marinescu, Bloomfield Hills, MI	\$300.00
Rev. Fr. & Ps. Cornel Todeasa, Monroe, CT	\$100.00
M/M William Murray, Regina, SK	\$60.00
Mary Candea, Cleveland, OH	\$50.00
Dr. Ion San-Marina, Weston, ON	\$39.16
M/M Valer Luca, Boardman, OH	\$25.00

GENERAL DONATIONS

Rev. Fr. & Ps. John Limbeson, Laguna Hills, CA	\$100.00 (Pascha Donation)
Rev. Fr. & Ps. Ioan Poptelecan, St. Paul, MN	\$100.00
Victor Leahul, Redford Twp., MI	\$25.00 (Pascha Donation)
Iuliana Campean, Grosse Pointe Park, MI	\$20.00
Anna Petroi, Livonia, MI	\$15.00

EPISCOPATE DUES

St. Mary, Cleveland, OH	\$7,000.00 (2000-2001)
Descent of the Holy Spirit / Sts. Peter & Paul, Assiniboia, SK	\$1,700.00 (1999-2000)
St. Elias, Lennard, MB	\$900.00 (1999-2000)
Sts. Constantine & Elena, Indianapolis, IN	\$800.00 (2000-2001)
St. John, Woonsocket, RI	\$400.00 (1999-2000)

ROMANIAN FLOOD VICTIMS FUND

Holy Nativity, Chicago, IL	\$2,000.00
St. Nicholas, Alliance, OH	\$800.00
Sts. Peter & Paul, Dearborn Hts., MI	\$650.00
St. Mary, Chicago, IL	\$370.00
Annunciation, Grand Rapids, MI	\$160.00
St. Joseph Catholic Church, Las Vegas, NV	\$50.00

Congress 2000 *Cont. from page 3*

strumental presentations. This "Sight & Sound" presentation is under the direction of Valerie Yova Sheets. During the program, collaborations of SOLIA will be honored with a presentation. The program begins at 8:00 p.m. in the Tower Pavilion.

On Saturday evening, a brief presentation on the 65th Anniversary of the enthronement of Bishop Policarp will be made. "The George Jinariu Orchestra from Dearborn will play traditional Romanian and also American music from 8:00 to 11:00 p.m.

Host parish for the Congress is "Nativity of the Virgin Mary" (St. Mary) Elmhurst, New York.

INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN THE CONGRESS LITURGY CHOIR: Faithful of all four parishes in the Greater Detroit area are invited by Valerie Sheets, Choir Director of Saint George Cathedral, to form the Congress Choir for the Divine Liturgy on Sunday, July 2. Rehearsals at the Vatra will be Saturday evening from 7:30 to 8:30 p.m. and Sunday morning, 9:00 a.m. ❀

THE ST. ANDREW CENTER FOR ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN STUDIES

SOME QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q. What is the Center for Orthodox Christian Studies?

A. The Center is a Michigan nonprofit corporation, incorporated in November, 1999. It has its own Board of Directors, and is an autonomous entity in the same ways as the parishes and monasteries of our Episcopate are. Its purpose is to teach the Orthodox Christian faith by word and example through formal instruction, worship, and good works. The Episcopate bears no financial obligation to the Center.

Q. On what authority was the Center established?

A. We have known for many years that we have needed to improve both the religious education of our youth and the preparation and skills of our clergy. For this reason, the 1999 Episcopate Congress approved the establishment of a school of Orthodox theology, with the proviso that the school function autonomously and not encumber the assets of the Episcopate.

Q. Who purchased and operates the building which houses the Center?

A. The building is purchased and operated by the Center for Orthodox Christian Studies, an autonomous Michigan nonprofit corporation. The Episcopate did not purchase any building. The Archbishop did not purchase any building in the Episcopate's name.

Q. What are the purposes of the Center?

A. The Center for Orthodox Christian Studies will operate three major ministries:

1. A *Chapel and Retreat ministry* will provide a facility where clergy and faithful may come for spiritual renewal, for day-long, overnight or extended retreats. Special groups such as youth, parents, men, women and senior citizens will be able to receive services tailored for their specific needs. These services can be offered throughout the year (not possible at the Vatra) and on a regular basis (not possible in parishes).

2. A *community Outreach ministry* will provide a visible Orthodox Christian witness to the non-Orthodox world. Food and clothing banks and a counseling service will be the first features of this ministry. A

library will make it possible for parishes and faithful to borrow books, videos and resources that otherwise might be too costly to purchase.

3. A *Christian Instruction ministry* will build and strengthen the Christian Education efforts of our Episcopate. Courses for adults and youth will be available both at the Center and on-line. The Andrei Saguna late vocations program will be expanded and improved to educate and train more men and women for the various ordained and lay ministries of the Church parish officers, readers, teachers, subdeacons and deacons. An advanced Diploma in Applied Pastoral Theology will provide continuing education for clergy to improve their skills for leading modern American parishes.

Q. Why can't we use the Vatra for these purposes?

A. As we all know, the buildings at the Vatra are of late 19th century wood construction. While serviceable for summer camps and meetings, they were not designed for winter use, with the exception of the main farmhouse. The Center for Orthodox Christian Studies offers year-round facilities for education, spiritual growth and community outreach. It is located in a major urban center, and is easily accessible to anyone who wishes to use its services. Presently, all of these programs and ministries suffer, due to lack of facilities and resources.

Q. How will the Center benefit our parishes?

A. All of the ministries of the Center are available for our parishes to use. By attending courses and retreats, bringing speakers from the Center to our parishes, training ourselves for ordained and lay ministries here at home, borrowing the books and materials of the library, and having our clergy continue their education at the Center, we will build and strengthen our own parishes in ways that simply would be impossible if we tried to do them on our own. ✱

Rev. Fr. Dr. Ian Pac-Urar

ST. NICHOLAS SUMMER CAMPS

Application forms are available from your
Parish Priest, or RODOC, Box 4023,
Regina, SK S4P 3R9

Send your forms in early

St. Nicholas Junior Camp
Boys and girls, ages 8 - 11
Sunday, July 9 - Saturday, July 15

St. Nicholas Senior Camp
Boys and girls, ages 12 - 16
Sunday, July 16 - Saturday, July 22

THE PRIEST AS BUSINESS MANAGER

by Father Alexander Garklavs

The priest's existence is defined by his functions as spiritual father, liturgical celebrant and teacher. Yet these aspects of ministry permeate into other dimensions of parish life. The priesthood is a high calling that requires lowly tasks. Our Lord's life and teachings demonstrate that it should be this way. **"He who is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much. If you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will entrust to you true riches?"** (Lk. 16.10). The priest is the presiding executive officer of the parish corporation, but he is also, simply put, one of its key workers. For clergy in the Orthodox Church in America, this has become part of the job description. Most OCA churches cannot afford full-time personnel other than the pastor. Occasionally, there may be a part-time secretary or custodian and parishioners often help with maintenance or groundskeeping. Even here the pastor may have to supervise with scheduling and operations. In many parishes he alone is a combination of personnel: secretary, computer expert, custodian, on-site contractor, etc.

Of course, every pastor is a person and every person is different. Some priests are comfortable changing light bulbs and taking out the garbage, some are not. Some have an aptitude for business, some do not. Others will have construction skills, while some cannot use a hammer. Without generalizing, what we can say is that parishes are energized by a pastor who is willing to work and work with people. As communities get smaller, where resources are limited, priests have to assume a variety of duties that were previously regarded as "unpriestly." Yes, first of all he makes time for prayer, for liturgical services, reading the Bible, the Fathers and meditation. If someone is truly blessed, all of the waking hours can be devoted to these pursuits. However, claiming "pastoral privilege" to surf the internet or look at book catalogs is not exactly an honorable excuse. The pastor who says that his job is not to be mindful of church repairs must be able to honestly justify it with a "cause worthy of a blessing."

"A Christian is one who labors whether he is rich or poor. Whatever his social and material position may be, a Christian is a laborer in the field of life. By the sweat of his brow he earns his physical and also his spiritual bread: eternal life in Christ. 'If any would not work, neither should he eat' (2 Thess. 3.10). And if he does not labor he is not a Christian" (from *The Orthodox Pastor* by Archbishop John Shahovskoy). Attention to the physical welfare of the parish is a part of the priest's duties that can actually be spiritually fulfilling. "Yet too often we seek riches, or at least

comforts and rest, disliking hard labor" (from *Counsels on the Christian Priesthood* by St. John of Kronstadt). The lives of saints frequently describe the physical labors of great spiritual heroes, who saw nothing demeaning in chopping wood, baking bread, tilling fields, or whatever. St. John of Damascus obediently cleaned latrines without complaint. All honorable tasks can be accomplished for the glory of God. By working around the parish the priest can be a great example to parishioners. A "servant is not greater than the master," and if the master is willing to work the servants will be inspired to do likewise.

While menial labor around the parish may be an option, in matters of business management the priest's active participation is crucial. Here we touch on what was once, and in certain quarters remains to be, a controversial area. Is the priest the chairman of parish assemblies and the parish council, should he be signing parish checks or not, should he be in on budget committee meetings, to what extent should he have freedom to purchase necessary items, should he have personal discretionary funds and in what amounts? Unfortunately, there exists no consistent policy to address these questions. The Statute of the Orthodox Church in America affirms that the parish priest presides over the parish meeting, but his described role in the parish council is less clear. This is largely due to the historical development of the OCA parishes which saw abrupt and unnatural changes that adversely impacted normal parish administration. For the most part, parishes today abide by a delicate balance, recognizing hierarchical authority and also acknowledging the parishioners' role in decision-making.

Whether he is officially chairing meetings, signing checks or not, the priest is the leader of the parish, spiritually, socially and administratively speaking. "No activities in the parish can be initiated without his knowledge, approval, and blessing" (*The Statute of the Orthodox Church in America*). This does not mean that he is simply given *symbolic* respect. Occasionally we hear the proverbial assertion that "the priest's job is confined to the sanctuary and sacramental needs, the business of the parish is run by people who know something about it." Implicit are two untruths, that the priest knows nothing except his liturgical duties and that parish laity are always accomplished business people. Parishes that relegate the priest only to liturgical functions seldom, if ever, have anything like a healthy spiritual life. Mistakes made by those "accomplished business people" are visible coast to coast, in numerous unsightly churches, ugly icons, unnecessary and inappropriate renewal projects, missed opportunities, financial misappropriation (almost always due to infractions by laity who nevertheless dreadfully fear the clergy's involvement in parish finances), etc. Priests have not always been courageous in challenging this. While one's good intentions can be overtly disregarded, in other cases priests deliberately choose to abstain from parish business and thus contribute to failures

that would have profited from their involvement. The opposite extreme is no better and there is no justification for priests' abuse of power. Insisting on their way or no way, pastors who refuse to listen to prudent advice embark on projects that are impractical and financially unwise. Here too, numerous cases (impractical church buildings, unnecessary renovations, etc.) remain as lasting examples.

Parish councils and committees should be chaired by the priest not for the purpose of rubber-stamping his every wish, but because he sets a tone of courtesy and objectivity, where all viewpoints are considered and an informed decision is reached by consensus. Effective management of parish business means being able to assess what is useful and realistic and to convey that in a dispassionate way. Often parish councils fall into a rut known as the "garbage can model." In studies of organizational systems the garbage can approach consists of a diverse group of people with differing motives and goals, with limited time and energy, all of whom have ideas that they would like to see accepted. Add to this mix an irrational mistrust or blind loyalty between certain personalities and you have the perfect setting for hours of fruitless, frustrating and spiritually damaging parish council meetings. Remarkably, these situations can go on for months or even years, because nothing is easier than to find some rationale to justify irrational behavior.

A priest may struggle with personal human passions that can impede parish business, but he must rise above them and proceed in a Christian (read also "practical and efficient") manner. Though some Orthodox clergy reject *Robert's Rules of Order* as "unchurchly," they are helpful in conducting business in an orderly way. Familiarity with them is very useful. However, the priest's most potent management tools are his exemplary Christian life! Therefore, his influence is strongest when it is least obvious. He inspires meetings by being reserved and respectful, and by considerate listening of all people, even those who may disagree with him. Then too, there is the "behind-the-scenes" influence: encouraging and nurturing talented and pious laity to get involved, developing bonds of trust and respect by consistent fairness, demonstrating a sincere personal commitment in acts of stewardship, etc.

Sometimes an outspoken lay leader may sway the congregation into adopting a plan for something that is quite useless. This can be a challenge. A quiet, prayerful surrender may be the only option. At other times, the priest musters all of his wisdom and courage to logically demonstrate the folly of the proposal. The pastor consciously represents the general welfare of the parish, not just certain groups. Sometimes he takes the initiative and advocates projects that seem unimportant. These may range from repainting over old icons to putting in a parking lot. Here the pastor becomes a salesman, PR person, fund-raiser, research consultant and possibly even a general contractor. However, the priest never forgets his essential task to

CLEVELAND MEMBER SCORES PERFECT SAT

Tudor Dimofte, a senior at Fairview High School and a member of St. Mary Cathedral, Cleveland, Ohio, scored a perfect 1,600 on the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) and was named one of 141 Presidential Scholars from among 2.5 million high school seniors from across the country. He plans to attend Princeton University in the fall.

Not only is Tudor the first Fairview High student in 25 years to score a perfect 1,600 on the SAT, but he is also active in school plays, the orchestra, Key Club, French Club and Student Council. Outside school, he is a violinist in the Northeast Ohio Regional Orchestra, has taken tap-dance lessons and is a member of the Cleveland City Club Youth Forum Council. Besides his academic ability, his teachers are most impressed with his humility and caring about other people.

Tudor's parents, Florin (an engineer) and Elena (an accountant), came to the U.S. from Romania with their only child in 1989. The family first settled in New Mexico, then moved to Greater Cleveland.

Out of 1.2 million tests given nationally last year, Tudor is one of 730 who achieved a perfect score. Tudor would like to teach or do research at a university. *

witness to the "only needful thing" whatever projects are at hand. He must be able to see and show how all parish business is directed for the glory of God and the good estate of the Holy Orthodox Church. The success or failure of parish projects does not necessarily correlate to the spiritual health of a community and sometimes failure can be a means of spiritual growth!

The pastor's role as parish leader is never easy. His involvement in the community as business manager requires great patience, skill and Christ-like humility. Useful also is a good sense of humor. The vicissitudes of parish business can escalate human emotions into violent outbursts, but at the core are usually rather insignificant details. A little levity can go a long way to ease tense situations. Priests rarely receive any formal business training though some occasionally take a continuing education course and find this to be beneficial. Today there is an increasing amount of helpful literature on the subject, even from an Orthodox perspective. Most of all we learn from trial and error, and by honest evaluation of the outcome. In discussing and sharing with capable pastors, it is possible to acquire fairly competent business skills. Experience clearly shows that productive, growing and spiritually alive parishes are characterized by productive, cooperative, and hard-working pastors, who inspire their parishioners with dedication and industriousness. Efficient business management can only be advantageous for pastors in their vocation to witness to Jesus Christ and His eternal Kingdom. *

Reprinted from Pastors to Pastors, Volume 7, Number 1, Spring 2000.

MISSION ACCOMPLISHED

An Evangelical Missionary to Romania Finds a Home in the Orthodox Church — The Story of David Hudson

Not long after I arrived in Romania as an evangelical missionary in 1993, a Baptist pastor with whom I was working said to me, “You think you came to Romania to do something for God, but perhaps He wants to do something for you.”

It was true that I was on a pilgrimage that had started when I was a child with an unusual thirst for spiritual things, but I really did not expect my searching to come to an end in Romania.

Searching for True Holiness

I was raised in the conservative Wesleyan movement, and baptized at the age of eight. Even as a child I was willing to stand alone for my religious convictions, and I strove to live a consistent Christian life. I learned to play the piano while in junior high, and soon my whole identity was wrapped up in music ministry.

There was a great emphasis on both inward and outward holiness in the churches of my youth. But I became disillusioned as a Bible college student, when I realized (1) that the “entire sanctification” we expected to receive instantaneously wasn’t working — not only in me, but even in church leaders I admired; and (2) I was in a religious ghetto and needed to find the true Church.

I found my way into the Reformed faith, which seemed to be the answer. No shortcuts, no superficial claims of sinlessness, lots of “Christian liberty,” and whatever couldn’t be explained otherwise was swept up into the mighty and mysterious sovereignty of God. The fact that it was a more intellectual faith also appealed to me at the time, as I was in the process of upward mobilization.”

Through marriage, however, I became part of the leadership of an independent evangelical congregation where “my” theology was tolerated, as long as it didn’t get in the way of the mission of our growing church. Everything was subservient to evangelism, everything was user-friendly, the visitor was king, and our still conservative Christianity was effectively marketed to the upwardly mobile that we considered our “target group.” My music ministry took a secondary place as I took on more administrative responsibility, eventually serving as executive pastor.

All the activity and success with its unending pressure took a toll on our souls, and we felt that something was missing in all this. Going into mid-life, we decided to break with this high-paced, all-consuming ministry enterprise and to go for a second career in missions. I had dreamed of music ministry in Europe

for a long time, and we decided this was the time. After a period of retraining and support raising, we were off to the university city of Cluj-Napoca, Romania: Mary and I, and our three daughters, Heidi, Heather, and Hannah.

Despite some difficult challenges, we adapted well and were thriving after a few years. We learned the language, the girls were in public schools, and we even bought an apartment with the intention of staying long-term. We were working with Baptist churches in worship renewal, especially in the area of music, and even beginning to compose some well-received songs in Romanian.

Then our whole life was turned upside down by Orthodoxy, as devastating as any tornado that ever hit Kansas.

A Surprising Discovery

I had nothing against Orthodoxy when I came as an evangelical missionary to a mostly Orthodox country. I didn’t see myself as a threat or competition to the majority faith. I did believe that the Orthodox Church, like older churches in general, was mostly dead, but I wanted to believe that there was some life and renewal in it. With pluralistic open-mindedness, I set out to find out what there was in Orthodoxy that was good, assuming that the roots of Romanian evangelicalism must be in Romanian Orthodoxy.

By coincidence, I had read *Becoming Orthodox* while in missionary training, and was impressed by what I read. But I didn’t see much in Romania that resembled Peter Gillquist’s glowing presentation. Orthodoxy seemed tired, stale, superficial, superstitious, frightfully formal, or, as one person commented, “feudal.” Compromise, corruption, and a museum-like fixation with the past were the impressions I got from the non-Orthodox people I talked with.

The services in the cathedral were like an opera without a plot, and it didn’t seem to matter whether you could follow what was going on. It was light years away from the overhead projectors and didactic emphasis of churches I had been involved in! In another downtown church, where I would duck in to pray occasionally, people just seemed to come and go all through the service — if you could call it that — much in the way that the priest appeared and disappeared all the time behind the curtain in the iconostasis. The chanter seemed somewhere between bored and distracted; it was routine to him. Why didn’t anyone seem to be interested in communicating anything to the visitor?

As one Romanian *duhovnic* (spiritual elder) recently said to me, it is truly a miracle that we became Orthodox in Romania. Absolutely no one did anything whatever to convert us.

Convinced that there had to be more to Orthodoxy, I kept wanting to get to the bottom of this mystery, even though I was too busy to give it a lot of time. The opportunity came at last to get to know a priest who was "evangelical," just what I was looking for. He was young, still finishing seminary, and in his fourth year of pastoring way out in a tumbledown village. Father Iustinian had been raised in a pious Orthodox home and had taken a stand for his faith under communism as a teenager, and now was in the priesthood. Not nominal or superficial in his faith, he was convinced of the claims that I had read about in Gillquist's book (and now others).

After some discussion, I asked him to celebrate a Divine Liturgy in such a way that I could understand it. He took me into the Holy Altar and explained as much as necessary, allowing me to watch every action and hear every prayer.

That day, in early May of 1995, I was "smitten" with Orthodoxy. I knew I had come into contact with a grace and a power and a holiness that I had never experienced before. It was unexpected. It was compelling.

A Time of Indecision

What to do? Our missionary career was just taking off, and our family was just feeling settled after the traumas of uprooting, relocating, enculturation, etc. We were fulfilled and excited about the future. I didn't even dare to speak to my wife about my new interest in Orthodoxy, as I knew this would mean an upheaval in our lives — one too many.

Just at that time, we were scheduled for a summer furlough in the U.S. As we came back, I was haunted by Orthodoxy, and felt compelled to take steps to pursue it. And yet, everything we had worked for and suffered for as a family was on the line. When my wife started to catch on, she warned me that she didn't think the girls could take this. But as she began to study and pray about it, she, too, began to see the reality of Orthodoxy.

After discussion with our mission society leadership, we decided that we must resign in order to pursue our newfound (and fragile) discovery. By mid-summer of 1995, we were embroiled in a heartrending conflict with loved ones, who felt betrayed and cheated. By the end of the summer, our "missionary career" was over and we were sidelined and stranded. Although at that time we came to the conclusion that we had been mistaken about Orthodoxy, trust had been destroyed and we were not able to resume our ministry.

We went into a year of "exile," working low-paying jobs to survive and trying to get our wits about us. What had happened? What went wrong? How could we have been derailed so easily after a lifetime of Christian teaching and active ministry?

Orthodoxy had seemed so beautiful, so right. It had put a new perspective on the unresolved questions and unsatisfied hungers in our spiritual lives. It was a new paradigm in which, suddenly, everything fit into place with nothing left over and pushed out of the doctrinal grid, as is the case with the doctrinal systems we were familiar with. It had seemed so true, so real, so much more spiritual than anything we had known. Could it really be a fantasy, as some said, or an abomination, as others said?

We tried to pick up the pieces and get on with our lives. The girls were devastated, and their trust in us and others was deeply shaken. We felt paralyzed and lost. We had seen too much new light to go back to our former way of being Christians. We could not really be evangelicals anymore, and since we could not be Orthodox either, we tried to forge our own way, combining the best of both. It was a desperate attempt to make sense of things and to satisfy our frustrated thirst for Orthodoxy.

In that state of mind, we returned to Romania on our own after our "year in exile." It seemed we had to, for several reasons. We had left our apartment, car, and belongings in limbo. We had left our friends and colleagues without good-byes or explanations. Our oldest daughter, Heidi, was going to enter the University of Cluj, and so we pulled ourselves together, mustered our fragile faith, and headed back.

Of course the main dangling question was Orthodoxy. We had to "return to the scene of the crime," to convince ourselves one way or another. We were graciously accepted back into our former Baptist music ministry, and we tried to make a go of working in a Protestant environment with Orthodox ideals. Outwardly it was fairly successful, but inwardly it was not satisfying. We knew that we had to give Orthodoxy another chance, this time a real chance.

Enlightened Through Prayer

So in the summer of 1997, we took the plunge and started going to the Divine Liturgy on Sunday mornings. Through Father Gordon Walker of St. Ignatius Church in Franklin, Tennessee (whom we had met in 1995), we became friends with American converts who had also come to Cluj as missionaries. Craig and Victoria Goodwin introduced us to an Orthodox daily devotional publication, DYNAMIS, a ministry of their home church, St. George Cathedral in Wichita (see the web site at <http://www.dynamis.cjb.net>).

As we used DYNAMIS for our discipline of daily

Cont. on page 10

Bible study, things began to fall into place; questions began to be answered. We also began to overcome our intimidation and to meet more priests and laypeople who impressed us with their truly Christian hearts and lives. The Archbishop of Cluj, BARTOLOMEU, granted us his blessing to begin translating DYNAMIS into Romanian and publishing it as a supplement to the Archdiocesan monthly.

Through all this, no one made any effort to pressure us to convert, and even when we eventually requested to be received into the Church through chrismation, no one was in a hurry. By that time, it was we who were impatient!

Mary, Heidi, and I were chrismated on Pascha, 1998, in the village where Father Iustinian now serves. What a peace settled over us when we finally got out of the stormy seas of pluralistic, idiosyncratic, and eclectic Christianity and into the ark of the historic, original, continuing life of the Church!

Heather chose to remain active in the Baptist high school and church, and having faced such trauma together over our conversion, we felt she needed the freedom to come to Orthodoxy if and when she is ready herself. Hannah was baptized a few weeks after Pascha of this year, 1999, just before turning twelve. It was a beautiful service, and a wonderful testimony to share with many who had taken their baptism for granted. With this milestone, we feel we have come a step deeper into the peace of the Church and closed another chapter in our pilgrimage.

Holiness in Reach at Last

Conversion is not easy, either before or after chrismation. There is so much to learn, and it is hard to go back to grammar school after a lifetime of leadership. In a way, it is like emigrating to a new country. You get your ticket and go; that is like being catechumens. Eventually you get your new citizenship; that is like chrismation. But you still have to adapt to the new culture and find your place in it; that is like the ongoing process of working out your salvation once you are in the Church. Pat answers and instant solutions are not part of true Christianity. But there is a real opportunity for everyone who "strives for the prize" to attain the riches that our new Motherland offers us.

Does it mean that there are no stumbling blocks and snares in the Orthodox Church? No. There are obviously many citizens in this new land who languish in spiritual poverty and disease, who, while they have the citizenship, do not cultivate the characteristics and privileges it offers. But there are towering examples of "success" to point the way for us.

Dying to everything that is false and unworthy, first of all in ourselves, we find ourselves reborn as

more human, more real, more peaceful, more settled, more healed, more loving and forgiving, even while we remain sinners. This is what Orthodoxy is about. It offers us real holiness, regaining the lost likeness of God; and we are not just given theories, but also the wherewithal to put them into practice.

Father Rafail Noica, an eminent Romanian *duhovnic* and himself a convert to Orthodoxy, says that Orthodoxy is the true nature of man, "red, yellow, black, or white." When we come home to Orthodoxy, we come to our senses, we become our true selves. Lord, where else could we go?

Now we know why the Lord brought us to Romania. Our mission was to discover and to embrace the historic Orthodox Church, the Church of the Apostles, and to work out our *own* salvation therein with fear and trembling. Perhaps in so doing, we will in some way be used to encourage those in the Church who, even in an Orthodox country, do not yet understand what their faith is all about. By God's grace we have become a few more candles shining in the Church. May that light also guide others who, as we were, are searching for something — something they may unexpectedly find in the Holy Orthodox Church. ✱

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FAMILY DAY IN CANTON

Saturday, April 1, 2000 was a very successful day for Orthodox families to come together and worship at St. George's Church in Canton, Ohio. There the faith was taught and preached for a better understanding. The day started off with morning prayers followed by a discussion with Fr. David Tillman from Holy Assumption Church. He went into an in-depth conversation about early Orthodox teachings.

After discussion, everyone sat down to a Lenten lunch. The lunch was prepared and donated by Canton AROY. Along with the meal, the AROY gave all the attendants a prayer book and a cross as a gift. Another discussion with Fr. Tillman took place after lunch. At that time, he answered questions from everyone in attendance. Much was learned from these informational teachings, and everyone appreciated the time and effort that was taken.

Psa. Paula Treff and the children who attended carried on their own Bible Lecture. The games and the lecture gave the children a better understanding of the Orthodox Faith. The day came to a close with Evening Prayers. All who attended were enriched by the learning experience at St. George's. It can truly be said that the day was enjoyed by all ages. ✱

Melanie Bogdan and Catherine Treff
(Canton AROY Historians)

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CLEVELAND ROMANIANS OBSERVE MAY 10



Cleveland Romanians attending Romanian Independence Day festivities.

On May 10, Romanians throughout the world who remember the days of glory of their nation celebrated Independence day. Cleveland Romanians assembled at St. Mary Romanian Orthodox Cathedral to observe this historic moment.

The program included an invocation by **Very Rev. Fr. Vasile Hategan**, who adorned his prayer with illustrations from Romanian literature and brought tears to the eyes of the attendees. Then **Fr. Remus Grama**, parish priest of St. Mary's, greeted the audience and introduced the artistic program dedicated to the true independence day. He led the participants in singing the "*Pe-al Nostru Steag*," "*Eroi Au Fost*" as well as "*God Bless America*." **Mrs. Maria Ghizdavu** evoked the sacrifices of Romanians for their independence from the Turkish empire in 1877 by reciting Cosbuc's poem: "*Trei, Doamne*." **Professor Muscutaru** sang with talent and love: "*Un Vultur Veni Din Munte*."

The **Very Rev. Fr. Richard Grabowski**, former parish priest, offered a moving presentation which called to mind the glorious moments of the Romanian history observed. He spoke of the glory of the arrival of King Carol I (1866) who led the country through the Independence War (1877), established the Romanian Kingdom (1881), crowning himself with a crown cut from the captivated Turkish canons of Osman Pasha. Speaking with the heart of one who swore fidelity to King Michael as a former Royal Army officer, he inspired pride in our brave ancestry. Fr. Grabowski has done much for this country of origin in leading the Help for Romania program of the Episco-

pate for several years.

At the conclusion of the program, Fr. Richard spoke about his trips to Romania, while Fr. Grama spoke about the 1992 trip of Mother Alexandra to Romania. The program ended with those in attendance singing "*Zece Mai*," "*Presărați Pe-a Lor Morminte*" and "*Tricolorul*." A reception was prepared with love by the Cultural Committee of St. Mary and Maria Ghizdavu in honor of the event. ✱

CLEVELAND A.R.O.Y. AT WORK

It is heart-warming to see the youth of the Church take their faith to heart. This spring, a very cohesive AROY team worked for two days to enhance the parish property in front of their Church School. The result of their work was a more beautiful landscape as well as a \$300 increase to their chapter's budget. This project was made possible through the hard work of Mike Vasu and Ethaniel Trifu, chairpersons for the project and all the members of the chapter who assisted them. It was nice to see parents such as Mariane Glodich, Marie Avramaut and Steve Trifu who supervised the work of the young people, making this day of work a real picnic. We hope to see more activities of this nature, which bond and build up the body of Christ. ✱

Reporter

THE GIFT OF LIFE — AN UNDESERVED RENEWAL

As Christians, surely we all recognize that it is God who gives life and God — unless impeded by man — who takes it away at a time and in a manner that is unfathomable to our limited minds. Our hierarchs and priests have paid particular attention in recent years to certain contraventions of the sanctity of life where God's gift to man is denied, knowingly and intentionally, by another. Less attention, it would seem, has been paid to situations where men or women surrender their lives through negligence, indifference, vain-glory, or pride. I would like to share with you my own experience, since it places me in the latter category.

This January my wife finally persuaded me to undergo a comprehensive physical examination that included a colonoscopy. I am sixty-six years of age, but I had never given serious thought to undergoing such an intrusive procedure. Why? Obduracy, laziness, a belief in my own powers of survival perhaps. I displayed an attitude that doctors and nurses tell me is typical of many men, less so of women. An unwillingness to be bothered by a procedure that probably deep down within me I believed to be women's business. How wrong I proved to be. My wife's action, the intervention of the doctors I consulted, and the admirable surgeon who performed a colon resection undoubtedly saved my life. After the surgery, my surgeon told me that he would have given me 3-6 months before the growth penetrated the colon wall and metastasized. In these circumstances, my chances of survival would have fallen from my present 90-95% to 30-40% after six months of chemotherapy. And those of you who have been through chemotherapy, or have had a loved one subjected to this misery, will know what this would have entailed.

Why do I attempt to place my negligence and indifference in a Christian context, in a context in which I am answerable to God for my sinful pride? It is because I have a wife whom I love and whom I first met in Romania almost forty years ago. She has every reason to expect my support and love as old age creeps up on us both. But more than this, we have two children who rightly look to us for the warm embrace of a continuing family relationship. One of them, it now seems, has recently been diagnosed with a serious illness, and will need desperately our love and support. How then could I defy God and make a pact with the devil about my bodily concerns? God did not give me life so that I should throw it away so carelessly and blindly. I cannot claim, I do not dare to claim, that God spared my life for a purpose — for it was the hand of man, my own, that exercised poor husbandry on that tiny part of God's creation that is my own body. Now that I have been brought to my senses I can better understand that retirement is not a time of self-

indulgence, a time to relax, payback-time for all those years of work, but a time to live up to my responsibilities. And in a Christian context such responsibilities are not limited solely to my wife and family, but to all those whom I can help in the time remaining. In other words, there is a time to receive and there is a time to give. My time for giving, whether I realized it or not, has come.

Why should I want to share my experience with you at this time? After all, colon surgery is a common-enough procedure; in many cases it saves human lives. In many cases, however, despite the skill of the surgeon and despite the post-operative therapies that are currently available, it does not and the patient ultimately dies. I would like others to learn and profit from my experience. I would like others to examine their own hearts and to ask themselves this question: am I postponing a life-saving procedure because of my own selfish concerns or, worse, because I am willing to play God with the course of my own life? Colon cancer is a silent killer; it is a major killer. Very often there are no obvious or discernible symptoms. At the present time, only a colonoscopy can reveal the presence of polyps that are already cancerous or are prone to become cancerous. The AMA has clearly stated that every man and woman should have a colonoscopy when he or she reaches the age of fifty, and thereafter at regular intervals. Moreover, where there is a family history of colon cancer, the age at which one should have the first colonoscopy is forty, not fifty. Obviously, I am an example of someone who failed to heed the advice of others. I am lucky to be alive and I give thanks for my deliverance every day. It is for you as fathers and mothers to ask yourselves the key question: am I due for a colonoscopy? But it is also for you as Christians to ask yourselves whether the sanctity of life divide that we all hold so dear does not also apply to you. May God in His infinite wisdom and mercy grant you peace, serenity, and continued good health! ✱

Michael Impey

Editor's Note: Michael Impey, now retired from the University of Kentucky, lives with his wife, Olga Tudorica Impey, in Bloomington, IN, where they are members of All Saints, an Antiochian pan-Orthodox parish, the only Orthodox parish in the city. He has lived for more than three and a half years in Romania and has many good and enduring friends there. He has published books and articles on Romanian literature and culture. He was received into the Holy Orthodox Church six years ago by Father Roman Braga at the Holy Dormition Monastery in Rives Junction, Michigan.

NURTURING THE ORTHODOX FAMILY

By John T. Chirban, PhD, ThD

*"The modern family is the building block
of society."*

"The contemporary family is slowly decaying."

We have all been exposed to such clichés that underscore the importance and endangerment of the family. Yet we seem to be at a loss about how to enhance the family structure. To respond to this dilemma, we need to consider facts about the current status of "the family" and clarify how we can nurture the Orthodox family in our own homes.

The psychological profiles of family members, in general, reflect a lack of emotional fulfillment, entanglements and enmeshed relationships. As a people, Orthodox Christians whose roots are based in traditional cultures, e.g., Greeks, Russians, Serbians, [Romanians,] tend to dismiss such alarming problems as alien to both the culture and tradition.

There is no question that, in the United States, Orthodox Christian Americans have felt the impact of American culture issues; drugs, alcohol, suicide, changing sex roles and role confusion, sexual promiscuity and its epidemics, as well as modern day epicureanism and hedonism have all made an impact. It may be helpful to recognize that these are all spiritually originated disorders. They are often symptoms of disordered homes and indelibly engrave their pathology on otherwise healthy children. The presence of these disorders and their symptoms are often less visible in the relatively affluent or the more culturally endowed people of our time. Middle class America is insulated or chooses to be insulated, from the reality of inharmonious homes. We do this vis-a-vis material comforts and worldly success-cushioning ourselves until "somehow," "out of nowhere," a symptom pushes through the facade in the form of divorce, drugs or suicide. In this way, comforts blur our vision of the importance of our spiritual lives.

I am suggesting that spiritual vitality is at the heart of the Orthodox family. But what exactly is spiritual vitality, and how do we know if spiritual vitality exists in our homes?

One test of spiritual vitality in our homes may be answered by asking direct questions: "What do I believe?" and "How are my beliefs made manifest in my life?" Our answers to these questions could be a barometer of our spiritual vitality and of our genuine life in Christ. Frequently, many families have no explicit beliefs and lack meaning and purpose. Life becomes simply a series of temporal stimulations. This ambiguity in life seems to be implicit in our culture, but it also defines what it means to be "existentially sick." If a family has no direction, it cannot be going anywhere. And if we understand the Devil (etymologically, *diavolos*, as the one who divides) as the author of chaos, this setting provides the breeding ground for trouble.

Many families perceive that they are "achieving" if children "get married", "have" a family, and "make" money. To be sure, many try this and find that it secures neither the marriage nor the family. Nor does it make family members more intrinsically fulfilled. Families' resources are exhausted with the expectation that such pleasures and luxuries as vacations, recreation and extravagant homes will constitute "success." What is discovered, again, is that in spite of such efforts, the family and its members are neither secured nor protected.

Clearly, a family is not simply the product of a wedding or children; it is rather a process and an experience of some complexity and "something more" as *pathos*, a virtuous yearning, or a "passionful" pride.**

Such filial love is expressed with equivalent power by Massachusetts Senator Paul Tsongas, who prematurely retired from the Senate in his early forties after learning that he had a chronic, terminal lymphoma. He wanted to spend his last years with his family. Tsongas stated, "I've yet to meet anyone who chose family over career and regretted it. No one on his death bed ever said, 'I didn't spend enough time with my business.'"

Yet if we are to speak objectively, we must recognize that there is nothing unique about culturally-based love in the family. Jews maintain this love, secular humanists endorse it, and, as a native of Cicero, Illinois, the "work place" of Al Capone, I can attest that even the Mafia practice it. Caring families are not necessarily Orthodox families. There is, however, another dimension in the Orthodox family which may help us to understand its finer elements. What matters is the degree to which the pathos of the home is influenced by the essence of the faith.

We need to ask: Is mere influence enough? Have we realized the potential power of our faith in marriage and the family? Or, more directly: Would it not be better for us to experience the full essence of the Orthodox family rather than merely to be influenced by it?

The Essence of the Orthodox Family

It should not be surprising to us that Jesus Christ had hardly anything to say about the basic family, as a building block, since a family is not defined by its structure but rather by its substance. The New Testament speaks of "God's household" and the "family of believers" (Ephesians 2:19, Galatians 6:10). Scriptural reference address what *fills the home*. For the Christian, the essence of the family, of life, is achieved in the spirit of God. A home based upon the resources of human beings alone does things that human beings do. A home based upon the resources of God does things beyond human imagination.

Therefore, the Orthodox family and home must recreate the particular elements which distinguish the Church; it must reflect the marks of the Church. As Orthodox Christians, we must see family life flowing out of the life of the Church, not vice versa. For when disordered homes influence the Church, entire congregations may lose their course. The priority must be God, who provides direction. Left to human design, the family becomes lost in the forces and values that surround it.

What are the elements of the Church? What marks of the Church should families properly manifest in the home? Holiness. Humility. Love. And action.

Holiness

St. Paul writes "to the saints" in his epistles, referring to Christians as those people who believe and work as they believe. Such are holy people, not perfect, but people who bring "God's power" into their daily lives. Christians who do not take their holy identity seriously lose their greatest asset — the chance to be in the process of experiencing and achieving their potential. It is through such holiness that we can be made into "new beings," thereby experiencing the "God-vision," *theoptia* to know a resurrected existence.

St. Gregory the Theologian says, "It is a good thing to speak of God but still better to purify oneself for God." A Christian home is one where family members learn how to affirm their goodness, and to correct their sins. Homes must convey holiness through the experiences of respecting, valuing and caring. We can do this practically by understanding our sins and our virtues. By acknowledging our "state," and improving our "selves," we embark upon the process toward holiness. In doing so one takes God and faith seriously.

Humility

When St. Augustine was asked to describe the Church, he said, "The first thing that I can say about the Church is humility." Certainly humility is the virtue upon which all other characteristics are built. Humility sets the stage for listening. If one can be humble, and listen, he or she can hear God, "other," and self.

Most of what we know about the communication gaps between parents, children and generations stems from the problem of poor listening. The individual is often so absorbed in his or her own thoughts that the needs, wishes, and concerns of others are rarely heard, let alone understood.

When we practice humility, we are open to God's grace and contribution of others. We are able to hear the voices that influence us — both inside and outside of our minds. With humility, we can hear the needs of our family and respond in kind. Humility is a harbinger of love.

Love

The Greek word for community, *koinotoita*, literally means communication. In the faith, as we communicate, we are bonded as a unit. Communication is therefore the process of love. One of the greatest diabolical attacks on the family is poor communication: husbands against wives; fathers against sons; and brothers against sisters. Through effective communication, love can nurture the wholeness of the family unit. The family, like the Church, must be a community, having a common unity. Christian communication, intimacy, and love cannot be separated from the love of God, as it is God who models and fuels "good relationships." Such family spirituality requires that we pray and talk about our relationships with God.

At the same time, love in the home needs to be expressed and experienced as friendship. The definition

that I prefer for "friendship" is illustrated with two circles that overlap one another, and one of those circles is divided into two. The drawing is accompanied with the maxim, "A friend doubles your joys and divides your sorrows." This concrete definition as a friend can also serve as a test for those who care about us. Indeed, those who love us double our enthusiasm and divide our pain. Such a definition of friendship should be modeled and experienced by the members of a family. Friendship of family encourages, comforts and enables each member to grow.

One Christian family prays openly together at the end of the day. If the husband and wife are arguing, they bring the "issue" to prayer, because above all else they agreed to pray together. In this way, their pattern of seeing arguments from a single point of view is broken by their commitment to God through communication. Through loving communication and friendship, we share quality time with one another. St. Paul insists, "...Love is long suffering, love is kind; love is not self-seeking, it is humble and not puffed up ... But it rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things." (I Corinthians 13:4-7). These characteristics of love provide the kind of solid reinforcement upon which a Christian home is built.

Action

Christ says, "You shall know them by their fruits!" (Matthew 7:16). In the Epistle of St. James, we learn, "Faith without works is a dead thing!" (James 2:17). The criteria for eternal life, according to Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew, is through works: feeding the hungry, giving shelter to the homeless, visiting the prisoners and caring for the afflicted (Matthew 25). Doing works bears witness to our faith.

By living in an Orthodox family, a child learns how to be cared for in the home so that he or she may give care in the world. The product of our family reflects the degree to which we have made the effort to connect the things we say or believe in the things we do. An Orthodox family integrates faith and life; it is real and ideal. It is holiness, humility, love and action. These qualities constitute our Christian identity and ultimately our well-being.

Nurturing the Orthodox family is critical for the individual and society. By drawing upon the natural, spiritual resources of the Orthodox faith, the sustenance of the individual, the home and the Church are assured and all are nurtured. ✱

* *Papajohn, J. Pothos. Alumni Lecturers, Brookline: Holy Cross Press, 1974.*

** *Tsongas, P. Heading Home. New York: Vintage Books, 1984.*

John T. Chirban, PhD, ThD is a professor of psychology and co-director of Counseling and Spiritual Development at Hellenic College-Holy Cross School of Theology and an advance fellow in behavioral medicine at Harvard Medical School at the Cambridge Hospital.

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HIERARCHAL SCHEDULE

March 25. Cleveland, OH. St. Mary Cathedral. Morning: Hierarchal Divine Liturgy for Annunciation feast day and ordination into priesthood of Deacon Adrian Grigoras, into the diaconate of Subdeacon David Subu and into the subdiaconate of Ioan Bogdan. Afternoon: Ohio-Western Pennsylvania Pan-Deanery Meeting on Status of the Parishes.

March 26. Grand Rapids, MI. Annunciation Mission. Hierarchal Divine Liturgy on the occasion of the fifth anniversary of the founding of the mission. Banquet.

March 27-30. Syosset, NY. OCA Chancery. Spring Holy Synod Meeting. March 27: Visit to St. Mary, Elmhurst, NY to see building progress. March 29: Proclamation of new Saint: Raphael of Brooklyn.

March 31-April 1. New York, NY. St. Dumitru. April 1: Hierarchal Divine Liturgy. Blessing of Iconostasion.

April 2. Dearborn Heights, MI. Sts. Peter & Paul. Hierarchal Divine Liturgy. Ordination of Deacon David Subu into the Holy Priesthood. Banquet.

April 9. Rives Junction, MI. Dormition Monastery. Hierarchal Divine Liturgy.

April 16. Rives Junction, MI. Dormition Monastery. Hierarchal Divine Liturgy.

April 22. Rives Junction, MI. Dormition Monastery. Hierarchal Divine Liturgy for Lazarus Saturday.

April 23. Warren, MI. Descent of Holy Spirit. Hierarchal Divine Liturgy. Palm Sunday Banquet.

April 27. Rives Junction, MI. Dormition Monastery. Morning: Hours and Hierarchal Divine Liturgy of Holy Thursday. Evening: Matins with 12 Gospels.

April 28. Troy, MI. St. Nicholas. Lamentations Service.

April 29. Rives Junction, MI. Dormition Monastery. Hours and Vespers Liturgy of Holy Saturday.

April 29-30. Southfield, MI. St. George Cathedral. Resurrection Matins followed by Paschal Hierarchal Divine Liturgy. Banquet.

April 30. Rives Junction, MI. Dormition Monastery. Afternoon: Agape Vespers of the Resurrection.

May 1. Rives Junction, MI. Dormition Monastery. Hours, Matins and Hierarchal Divine Liturgy of Bright Monday.

May 2. Detroit, MI. St. Andrew Center for Orthodox Christian Studies. Hours, Matins and Hierarchal Divine Liturgy of Bright Tuesday.

May 6. Rives Junction, MI. Dormition Monastery. Matins & Hierarchal Divine Liturgy for second hram of monastery. Blessing of water.

May 7. Rives Junction, MI. Dormition Monastery. Hierarchal Divine Liturgy. Blessing of graves for Thomas Sunday.

PARISH REGISTER

BAPTISMS

Batsu, Corinne Victoria, daughter of Mihai & Mariana Batsu, Monroe, CT. St. Dimitrie, Bridgeport, CT. Godparents: Corina & Florin Malureanu.

Dima, Alexandra, daughter of Christian & Stela Dima, Huntington, CT. St. Dimitrie, Bridgeport, CT. Godparents: Anisor & Aura Saru.

Ruzan, Marcel Jon, son of Jon & Dorina Ruzan, Glendale, AZ. St. John, Glendale, AZ. Godparents: Felician & Juliana Gurujan and Mircea & Kornelia Gurujan.

DEATHS

Bukur, Eli, 84. Descent of Holy Spirit, Merrillville, IN.

Ciprianu, Liliana, 12. Descent of Holy Spirit, Merrillville, IN.

Danarico, Dumitra Melania, 80. St. Dimitrie, Bridgeport, CT.

David, Donald Michael, 64. St. George Cathedral, Southfield, MI.

Graber, Demetru (James), 74. St. Elijah, Lennard, MB.

Muntean, John R., 88. St. George Cathedral, Southfield, MI.

Myers, Elizabeth, 90. St. George Cathedral, Southfield, MI.

Pavel, Doris, 45. Descent of Holy Spirit, Merrillville, IN.

Punga, Nick, 82. Descent of Holy Spirit, Assiniboia, SK.

Yorga, Victoria, 64. Descent of Holy Spirit, Assiniboia, SK.

**JULY ISSUE
DEADLINE
*June 16***

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May 13-14. Toronto (Scarborough), ON. St. John the Evangelist Mission. Great Vespers. Hierarchal Divine Liturgy. Banquet.

May 20. Southfield, MI. St. George Cathedral. Episcopate Council Meeting.

May 21. Southfield, MI. St. George Cathedral. Hierarchal Divine Liturgy. ✱

DROPPING THE BALL

One of the most important concepts we as Christian educators can teach our students is failure — yes, failure — or, how to deal with failure. It is a strange notion. We sing and talk constantly in our Orthodox service about triumph and victory. “Victory over every adversary,” and “triumph over death” are spoken at liturgy. So, where does failure come in? Christianity is a faith about victory and success — not failure!

Probably one of the most dangerous trends in modern theology, in the last half of the twentieth century, has been the proliferation of prosperity theology.” With its emphasis on Old Testament writings, this “theology” tells us that if we obey the commandments, go the church, have a loving relationship with Christ, we will be blessed with all the good things in life — a healthy family, good marriage, and material prosperity. This “theology” also tells us that if we don’t have that consistent good relationship with God, the good things in life will escape us — our marriages will break up, our children will be rebellious, we’ll lose our jobs, etc. Televangelism is filled with prosperity theology. This latter day Calvinist thinking has resulted in a good deal of anxiety and alienation from God. The truth is, true believers have always experienced failure in his world — in fact more so. Orthodoxy and history teach us that the faith is most powerful during the years of persecution — “test by fire.” During these times, the faithful are killed, have their property taken away, lose their jobs and in many cases lose their families. Contrariwise, people who have no relationship with Christ and the Church, become wealthy, have good and happy families, etc. A man who lived to a ripe old age was asked the secret of his longevity. He answered “I drank, I smoked, and I chased women all my life. If I knew that I was going to live this long, I would have taken better care of myself.”

Back to failure, the Bible is filled with great failures. In fact, throughout the Bible, we are presented with one failure after another — big losers! Peter denied his friend and master, Jesus, three times about 24 hours after declaring his loyalty at the Last Supper. The disciples fled at Jesus’ arrest, Paul was beaten numerous times, arrested, shipwrecked, stoned and finally beheaded. John the Baptist was arrested and beheaded. King David, for a good period of time, was a fugitive. Asking, he was caught up in a sex scandal and had problems with his children. The list goes on. These are our heroes?

In his book, *Thinking for a Change: Discovering the Power to Create, Communicate and Lead*, consultant Michael Gelb teaches new ways to learn and change habits of individuals and organizations. In teaching his concepts he often uses juggling as an example.¹

The focal point of Gelb’s teaching is a different attitude toward mistakes. “There is plenty of research to show that the most successful individuals and organizations are characterized by their resilience in the face of

adversity.” He says “Many people can’t learn to juggle, because they can’t deal with dropping the balls. What they perceive as repeated failure, they just give up. So, I teach them to drop the balls on purpose.”²

Successful Christians are pretty much the same way. It is inevitable that in the process of our being saved that we are going to fail — or “sin.” In fact, we’re going to fail repeatedly. The successful Christian will be resilient in the face of the adversary. We, Christian educators and parents, have to help our students to understand that when the balls are dropped, we don’t just give up on God, our church and our faith.

In juggling, “Trying harder isn’t the answer — you’re just going to be doing the wrong thing better.” Gelb continues, “Before you can change, you have to become aware of what you are doing, usually through the feedback of a partner.”

In Christianity, marriage often acts as a crucible of change or redemption. Together with a loving partner, who makes us aware of our mistakes, failures, bad habits, etc., we perceive feedback on our life-styles. Change, repentance, redemption, are the keys to Christianity and marriage. Our relationship with a Christian community (church) can act in much the same way. Non-judgmental acceptance of each other’s failures and mistakes and offerings of loving advice can go along way in furthering the redemptive process or “Christian creation.”

How can we instruct our students in failure? How do we communicate the need for resilience and dealing with dropping the balls repeatedly. We could use Gelb’s learning to juggle exercise. We could also use the many role models that the Bible provides for us. For instance, a role modeling exercise, “pretend you are Peter and you have just denied your friend Jesus three times. What do you do next?” “Jesus, the great teacher, used parables to illustrate many points; but, failure and how to deal with it is best illustrated in the parables of “The Prodigal Son” and “The Publican and the Pharisee.” The “Repentant Thief” is also a strong “failure” reference point. The last thing we need to teach is a poisoned theology of idealistic perfectionism. The Christian home, for instance, must be a place where our children can return and be accepted, even though they may have failed in “the world.”

Great examples of how not to deal with failure, are presented in the characters of Judas Iscariot and the “rich young man.” Judas, you recall, instead of coming back to God and asking forgiveness, went out and “hanged himself.” The rich young man confronted with selling all that he had and giving it to the poor, walked discouraged.

Our message to our students and children is that we will fail in life time and time again. Yet, even though we fail — “sin,” we have opportunities to change and come back to God and His Church, our families and friends. Learning spiritually and changing with each ball we drop is part of the process of salvation. ✱

1. Industry Week, volume 245, number 10, May 20, 1996, “Having a Ball,” pg. 131-135.

2. Same

From the Orthodox Christian Education Commission News, November 1, 1999.

NOTA REDACȚIEI: *Lipsiți de educație religioasă pentru cinci decenii, majoritatea credincioșilor de origine română nu au suficiente cunoștințe religioase pentru a înțelege care este rostul preotului într-o parohie, mulți fiind tentați să creadă că: "rolul preotului e doar de a sluji la altar, de restul ne ocupăm noi..."*. Tocmai pentru a lămuri acest aspect publicăm în cele ce urmează un articol al Părintelui Alexander Garklavs, preluat din revista "Pastors to Pastors" volumul 7, numărul 1, primăvara anului 2000, pag. 1-2.

PREOTUL CA ADMINISTRATOR

Viața preotului este definită de funcțiunile sale de părinte spiritual, sau de cele trei slujiri sau puteri ale preotului: slujirea sau puterea învățătoarească, slujirea sau puterea sfîntitoare (sacramentală) și slujirea sau puterea conducătoare. Cu alte cuvinte funcțiile preotului sunt: de a învăța poporul, de a-l binecuvânta și sfinți prin lucrări sacramentale și de a-l conduce pe calea mântuirii. Toate aceste aspecte ale slujirii preoțești se întrepătrund cu alte dimensiuni ale vieții din parohie. Preoția este o chemare înaltă care cere multă smerenie. Viața și învățătura Mântuitorului ne arată că aceasta este calea pe care trebuie să o urmăm. "Cel ce este credincios în foarte puțin și în mult e credincios; și cel ce e nedrept în foarte puțin și în mult este nedrept. Deci dacă n-ați fost credincioși în bogăția nedreaptă, cine vă va încredința pe cea adevărată?" (Luca 16, 10-11). Preotul este funcționarul executiv care prezidează (conduce) parohia, dar el este de asemenea, simplu spus, funcționarul cheie al parohiei. Pentru clerul din cadrul Bisericii Ortodoxe din America, această specificare a devenit una din descrierile muncii pe care o face preotul. Cele mai multe din parohiile Bisericii Ortodoxe din America nu-și pot permite să aibă alt funcționar angajat cu normă întreagă decât preotul paroh. Ocazional, putem întâlni o secretară cu normă redusă sau un custode, iar de multe ori enoriașii ajută la curățenie și la întreținerea proprietăților parohiei. Dar chiar și în acest caz preotul trebuie să organize întreaga activitate. În cele mai multe din parohii, preotul este o combinație de personal: secretară, expert în computere, custode, contractor etc.

Bineînțeles că fiecare preot este o persoană și fiecare persoană este diferită. Unii preoți se simt confortabil schimbând becuri arse și ducând gunoiul, alții nu. Unii au aptitudini pentru faceri, alții nu. Ații pot avea aptitudini în construcții și reparații, în vreme ce alții nu se pot folosi de un ciocan. Fără a generaliza, ceea ce se poate afirma este că parohiile sunt stimulate, înviorate de un preot care este dispus să muncească și să muncească cu oamenii. Cu cât comunitatea este mai mică și resursele mai limitate, preoții trebuie să-și asume o varietate de sarcini care mai înainte erau socotite ca "nepreotești". Sigur, înainte de toate, preotul trebuie să-și facă timp pentru rugăciune, pentru serviciile liturgice, pentru lectura Sfintei Scripturi și lecturi din Sfinții Părinți, pentru meditație. Dacă cineva este cu adevărat binecuvântat, își poate dedica diminețile și timpul dinainte de culcare împlinirii acestor scopuri.

Însă a pretinde "privelegiu pastoral" pentru a petrece timpul pe Internet sau pentru a se uita în cataloage de cărți nu reprezintă exact o scuză onorabilă. Preotul care afirmă că nu este treaba sa să se îngrijească de reparațiile bisericii, trebuie să poată justifica onest atitudinea sa prin "binecuvântate pricini".

"Creștin este acela care lucrează indiferent dacă este bogat sau sărac. Indiferent de poziția sa socială sau materială, creștinul este un lucrător în câmpul vieții. Prin sudoarea frunții sale el își câștigă atât pâinea materială cât și cea spirituală: viața veșnică în Iisus Hristos. "Dacă cineva nu muncește, atunci nici să nu mănânce." (I Tesal. 3, 10). Și dacă nu muncește atunci nu este creștin." (din cartea *The Orthodox Pastor* de Arhiepiscopul John Shahovkoy). A avea atenția îndreptată asupra bunăstării materiale a parohiei este una dintre îndatoririle preotului, îndatorire care dealtfel poate fi îndeplinită duhovnicește. "Frecvent noi căutăm bunăstarea, sau cel puțin confortul și odihna, neplăcându-ne munca grea." (Din *Sfaturi asupra preoției ortodoxe* de Sfântul Ioan de Kronstadt). Viețile Sfinților descriu frecvent munca fizică a marilor eroi duhovnicești, care nu au văzut nimic degradant în a ciopli lemne, a face pâine, a ara pământul și așa mai departe. Sf. Ioan al Damascului a curățat toaletele cu supunere fără a se plânge. Orice muncă onorabilă poate fi îndeplinită spre slava lui Dumnezeu. Lucrând în jurul parohiei preotul poate fi un extraordinar exemplu pentru enoriași. (Se cuvine să amintim aici cum este exemplificat acest lucru în literatura română în nuvela "Popa Tanda" a preotului Ion Agârbiceanu, n. red.) "Nu este slujitorul mai mare decât stăpânul", și dacă stăpânul este dornic de a lucra și slujitorii vor fi impulsionați să facă asemenea.

Decă munca de îngrijire pe lângă parohie poate fi o opțiune, în cazul administrării parohiei participarea activă a preotului este crucială. Aici atingem ceea ce a fost odată și în anumite părți încă este, o problemă controversată. Este preotul președintele Adunării Generale și al Consiliului Parohial, trebuie el să semneze cecuri sau nu, trebuie el să fie prezent la întrunirile comitetului de stabilire a bugetului, până unde să i se permită libertatea în a utiliza fonduri pentru a cumpăra lucruri necesare, trebuie el să aibă fonduri la discreția sa și în ce sumă? Din nefericire, nu există o linie de conduită consecventă pentru a răspunde acestor întrebări. Statutul Bisericii Ortodoxe în America (ca și al Episcopiei Ortodoxe Române din America, n. red.) afirmă că preotul paroh este cel care prezidează (conduce) adunările (ședințele) din parohie, dar descrierea rolului său în Consiliul Parohial este mai puțin clar. Aceasta se datorează în largă măsură dezvoltării istorice a parohiilor în America, dezvoltare care a văzut schimbări abrupte și nenaturale, care au avut un impact negativ în administrarea normală a parohiilor. În cea mai mare parte, astăzi parohiile suportă o delicată balanță, recunoscând autoritatea ierarhică și luând act de rolul parohienilor în stabilirea deciziilor.

Fie că el prezidează (conduce) ședințele, semnează cecuri sau nu, preotul este conducătorul parohiei din toate punctele de vedere: spiritual, social și administrativ. "Nici o activitate în cadrul parohiei nu poate fi inițiată fără cunoștința, aprobarea și binecuvântarea sa." (*Statutul Bisericii Ortodoxe din America*) — (același lucru se precizează și în *Regulamentele Episcopiei Ortodoxe Române din America*, Art. IX, Secțiunea 18, n. red.) Aceasta

nu înseamnă că preotului îi este acordat un respect *simbolic*. Ocazional auzim proverbiala aserțiune: "treaba preotului este limitată la altar și la nevoile sacramentale, iar treburile (administrația) parohiei este condusă de către oameni care știu ceva despre acest lucru." Implicit, în această afirmație se prezintă două neadevăruri: primul că preotul nu cunoaște nimic cu excepția îndatoririlor sale liturgice și al doilea că laicii dintr-o parohie sunt întotdeauna oameni care cunosc administrație și au progresat în afaceri. Parohiile care consideră că rolul preotului trebuie redus numai la funcțiunile liturgice, arareori, dacă vreodată, au ceva în comun cu o viață spirituală sănătoasă. Greșeli săvârșite de acești "oameni de afaceri realizați" sunt vizibile de la o coastă la cealaltă a continentului, în biserici neplăcute la înfățișare, icoane urâte, proiecte de renovare inutile și nepotrivite, oportunități pierdute, deturnări și însușiri ilegale de fonduri (aproape întotdeauna datorită infracțiunilor laicilor care se temeau grozav de implicarea clericilor în finanțele parohiei) etc. Preoții nu au fost întotdeauna curajoși în a se opune acestei tendințe. Dacă în unele cazuri bunele intenții ale unora au fost fături trecute cu vederea, în alte cazuri preoții au ales în mod deliberat să nu se implice în administrarea parohiilor și au contribuit prin aceasta la greșeli care ar fi putut fi evitate prin implicarea lor. Cealaltă extremă nu este cu nimic mai bună și nu este nici o scuză pentru abuzul de putere al unor preoți. Insistând în punctul lor de vedere sau în niciunul, preoții care refuză să asculte de sfaturi prudente se imbarcă în proiecte care nu sunt practice sau neînțelepte financiar. Și aici, numeroase cazuri (clădiri de biserici care nu sunt practice, renovări care nu erau necesare etc.) rămân ca exemple.

Consiliile Parohiale și comitetele trebuie să fie conduse de către preot nu pentru scopul de a sigila orice dorință a sa, ci pentru faptul că preotul dă tonul curteziei și obiectivității, dând posibilitatea exprimării tuturor punctelor de vedere și luării unei decizii prin consens. Administrarea efectivă a parohiei se realizează prin evaluarea a ceea ce este folositor și realist și prin comunicarea acestei analize într-o manieră lipsită de patimă. Deseori consiliile parohiale alunecă într-un făgaș cunoscut ca "modelul găleții de gunoi". În studiile dedicate sistemelor organizaționale expresia "găleții de gunoi" este asociată cu imaginea mai multor grupuri de oameni cu diferite motive și scopuri, cu o perioadă de timp și energii limitate; toți având idei pe care ar dori să le vadă acceptate de ceilalți. Adăugați acestui amestec neîncredere irațională și loialitate oarbă față de anumite persoane și aveți scenariul perfect pentru ore întregi de infructuoase, pline de frustrări și prejudicii spirituale ale ședințelor de consiliu parohial. Este de remarcat faptul că aceste situații pot continua luni întregi sau chiar ani de zile pentru că nimic nu este mai ușor decât a găsi o justificare rațională pentru un comportament irațional.

Preotul poate să se străduiască să combată pasiuni omenești personale care pot împiedica administrația parohiei, dar el trebuie în primul rând să se ridice deasupra tuturor patimilor și să procedeze într-o manieră creștinească (a se citi de asemenea "practică și eficientă"). Deși unii clerici ortodocși resping *Robert's Rule of Order* ca fiind "nebisericăscă", "*Robert's Rule of Order*" este foarte folositoare pentru a conduce ședințele în ordine. A fi familiar cu aceste reguli este de mare folos. Totuși, cele

mai puternice mijloace de management ale preotului sunt reprezentate de viața sa creștină exemplară. De aceea, influența sa este mai puternică atunci când este mai puțin evidentă. El este o sursă de inspirație în ședințe fiind rezervat și respectuos, ascultând pe toată lumea, chiar și pe cei care nu sunt de acord cu el. Apoi, există așa-zisa influență "din spatele cortinei": încurajarea laicilor pioși de a se implica, dezvoltarea legăturilor de încredere și respect printr-o continuă onestitate, demonstrarea unui angajament personal sincer în administrație etc.

Câteodată un lider laic cu renume de om sincer poate să determine comunitatea în a adopta un plan pentru ceva care este nefolositor. Acest lucru poate fi o încercare. O tăcută, cucernică cedare de moment poate reprezenta unica opțiune. Alteori, preotul trebuie să-și adune toată înțelepciunea și curajul pentru a demonstra logic nebunia unei asemenea propuneri. Preotul reprezintă conștient binele general al parohiei, nu numai anumite grupuri. Câteodată el ia inițiativa și susține proiecte care par neimportante. Acestea pot varia de la refacerea picturii unor icoane vechi până la stabilirea unui spațiu de parcare. Aici preotul devine om de afaceri, inițiator al ridicării de fonduri, consultant în materie, vânzător și, posibil, chiar general contractor. Totuși, preotul niciodată nu uită misiunea sa esențială de a da mărturie asupra "singurului lucru necesar", oricâte proiecte ar avea pe cap. El trebuie să fie capabil să vadă și să arate că toate lucrurile săvârșite în parohie, toată administrația este îndreptată spre slava lui Dumnezeu și spre bunăstarea Sfintei Biserici Ortodoxe. Succesul sau insuccesul proiectelor unei parohii nu reflectă neapărat sănătatea spirituală a comunității și câteodată chiar greșelile pot determina o trezire și o creștere duhovnicească!

Rolul preotului ca lider al parohiei nu este niciodată ușor. Implicarea sa în comunitate ca administrator solicită multă răbdare, îndemânare și o smerenie ca a lui Hristos. Folositor este și un bun simț al umorului. Vicesitudinile (schimbările) în administrarea parohiei pot determina escaladarea emoțiilor omenești în dezlănțuirii violente, care în esență pornesc de obicei de la detalii aparent ne semnificative. O ușoară glumă poate detensiona situații încordate. Preoții rareori primesc o pregătire formală în administrație deși unii iau ocazional cursuri educaționale în acest sens și le găsesc benefice. (*Trebuie menționat că în România în cadrul Seminarilor Teologice se studia vreme de doi ani disciplina numită "Administrație Parohială", numai că pregătirea se făcea pentru contextul parohiilor și realităților din România, de multe ori diferite de cele din Americă n. red.*) Astăzi există o literatură de specialitate chiar și din perspectivă ortodoxă. Dar cel mai mult se învață din încercări și eșecuri, și din evaluări oneste ale rezultatelor. Discutând și împărtășind experiențele proprii cu preoți care au multă experiență este de asemenea posibil să dobândim mai multe cunoștințe în domeniu. Experiența ne arată evident, că parohiile înfloritoare din punct de vedere spiritual și material, sunt caracterizate de munca grea, productivă și cooperativă a preoților, care își inspiră enoriașii prin dedicație și hărnicie. Administrarea eficientă de către preoți a parohiilor reprezintă un avantaj pentru parohii în vocația lor de mărturisire a Mântuitorului Iisus Hristos și a veșnicei Sale Împărății. ✱

CENTRUL DE STUDII CREȘTIN-ORTODOXE “SF. ANDREI”

Câteva Întrebări și Răspunsuri

Întrebare: Ce este Centrul de Studii Creștin-Ortodoxe “Sf. Andrei”?

Răspuns: Centrul de Studii Creștin-Ortodoxe “Sf. Andrei” este o corporație nonprofit încorporată în Statul Michigan în noiembrie 1999. Centrul are un Consiliu de conducere (Board of Directors) și este o entitate autonomă, la fel ca și parohiile și mănăstirile din Episcopia noastră. Scopul Centrului este de a preda credința ortodoxă cu ajutorul cuvântului și a faptei prin instrucție formală, rugăciune și fapte bune. Episcopia nu are responsabilitate financiară față de Centrul “Sf. Andrei”.

Întrebare: Cine a autorizat înființarea Centrului?

Răspuns: De mai mulți ani s-a simțit nevoia de a îmbunătăți educația religioasă a tineretului și de a pregăti clerul pentru realitățile din America. În acest scop, Congresul Episcopiei din 1999, a aprobat înființarea unei școli de teologie ortodoxă, cu mențiunea că această școală va funcționa autonom și nu va împovăra financiar Episcopia.

Întrebare: Cine a cumpărat și cine are în folosință clădirea care găzduiește Centrul?

Răspuns: Clădirea a fost cumpărată și se află în folosința Centrului de Studii Creștin-Ortodoxe “Sf. Andrei”, o corporație nonprofit încorporată în Statul Michigan. Episcopia nu a cumpărat această clădire. Înalt Prea Sfințitul Arhiepiscop NATHANIEL nu a cumpărat nici o clădire în numele Episcopiei.

Întrebare: Care sunt scopurile Centrului?

Răspuns: Centrul pentru Studii Creștin-ortodoxe va avea trei funcțiuni majore:

1. *Capelă și Centru de reculegere spirituală.* Centrul va oferi facilitățile sale unde clericii și credincioșii vor putea veni pentru înnoire spirituală, pentru o zi sau mai multe. Grupuri special organizate de tineri, părinți, bărbați, femei sau bătrâni vor putea obține servicii special dedicate nevoilor lor. Aceste servicii vor putea fi oferite pe parcursul întregului an calendaristic (lucru care nu este posibil la Vatra) și pe baze regulate (lucru imposibil în parohii).

2. *O comunitate de slujire a celor din afară,* va furniza o măturie (prezență) creștină ortodoxă către lumea ne-ortodoxă. Primele semne ale acestei slujiri vor fi colectarea de hrană și îmbrăcăminte și un

serviciu de consultanță. O bibliotecă va face posibil împrumutul de carte, video și alte materiale de către credincioși și parohii, toate aceste materiale fiind deseori prea costisitoare pentru a putea fi cumpărate.

3. *O instrucție în vederea slujirii creștine* va întări eforturile Episcopiei noastre în vederea educației creștine. Cursuri pentru adulți și pentru tineret vor fi disponibile atât la Centrul “Sf. Andrei”, cât și prin intermediul Internetului. Programul de vocație târzie Andrei Șaguna va fi extins și îmbunătățit pentru a educa și pregăti mai mulți credincioși, pentru diferitele nevoi și slujiri ale Bisericii: cântăreți, citeți, ipodiaconi, diaconi, profesori de religie. Cursurile de studii aprofundate în Teologie Pastorală vor asigura o continuă educație pentru cler, pentru a-și îmbogăți cunoștințele în vederea păstoririi moderne a parohiilor americane.

Întrebare: De ce nu se folosește Vatra pentru aceste scopuri?

Răspuns: După cum se cunoaște, clădirile de la Vatra au fost construite din lemn la sfârșitul secolului al XIX-lea. Deși aceste clădiri pot fi utilizate pentru taberele de vară și Congres, ele nu pot fi folosite iarna, întrucât cu excepția casei centrale, nu sunt dotate cu instalații de încălzire. Centrul “Sf. Andrei” pentru studii creștin-ortodoxe oferă facilități de-a lungul întregului an pentru educație, creștere spirituală și slujire a comunității. Locația sa este într-un centru urban major care este ușor accesibil pentru oricine dorește să folosească facilitățile sale. În prezent, toate aceste programe de educație și slujire suferă datorită lipsei facilităților și resurselor adecvate.

Întrebare: Cum vor beneficia parohiile de acest Centru?

Răspuns: Toate programele de educație, slujire și pregătire ale Centrului “Sf. Andrei” sunt destinate în primul rând membrilor parohiilor din Episcopia noastră. Prin participarea la cursuri, retrageri spirituale, conferințe și seminarii, prin folosința materialelor din biblioteca Centrului în parohii, prin pregătirea candidaților la hirotonie și prin continua educație și pregătire a clerului în acest Centru, noi vom edifica și întări parohiile noastre cu mult mai mult decât ne-ar fi posibil acționând independent.✱

Rev. Fr. Ian Pac-Urar, Ph.D.

INTERNETUL, ÎN SLUJBA LUI DUMNEZEU ...!?

De la începuturile sale, învățătura creștină a fost pregătită spre a fi răspândită în toate colțurile pământului. Un mesaj universal începea să fie transmis, la început, pe cale orală, prin Apostolii care au propovăduit, răspândindu-se în lume, și-a asigurat continuitatea prin scrierile Apostolilor. Astfel adevărata învățătură, s-a adunat în chintesența ei în Scrierile Sfintei Scripturi. În acel timp oamenii *scriau pe papirus*, mod care n-a rezistat multe secole. Odată cu apariția tiparului, tot mai multă informație se putea înmagazina într-o carte. În zilele noastre, mai ales în ultimile decenii, cărțile pot fi transmise la mii de kilometri într-un timp foarte scurt. Rețeaua internet a cunoscut o dezvoltare extraordinară, având la ora actuală un *numar mare de navigatori*, pe tot globul pamântesc. Este o nouă realitate cu care vrând-nevrând Biserica Creștină se confruntă, mai ales în țările dezvoltate, și cu precădere în America.

Noul sistem de propagare a informației, poate fi folosit pentru răspândirea Evangheliei în lume.

În Europa Apuseană, la inițiativa Bisericilor protestante, și a Bisericii Romano-Catolice, a avut loc în fiecare an, începând cu anul 1996, Conferința Creștină Europeană Internet (ECIC).

În anul 1999, a patra ediție s-a desfășurat în Dreibergen, Olanda, unde au participat 30 de reprezentanți din 15 țări, dintre care 6 participanți din țările Europei de Est, inclusiv România. Au avut loc conferințe, grupuri de lucru și discuții despre consecințele tehnologiei informaționale pentru credință creștină și influența rețelei internet în procesul de răspândire și proclamare a mesajului creștin în Estul și Vestul Europei.

Dintre problemele discutate sunt noțiuni noi, cum ar fi Biserica Cibernetica (Cyber Church), care are în componență comunități (parohii) *virtuale*, care la rândul lor sunt compuse din membri, adică *navigatori* de pe rețeaua de internet.

O altă problemă, la care s-a și dat un răspuns, cumva, semi-satisfăcător, a fost întrebarea: *Ce se întâmplă cu imaginea lui Dumnezeu și cu viața creștină în contextul rețelei de Internet?*

Oamenii de astăzi, pot participa la discuții despre viață, slujbe și procesiuni liturgice, pot primi indemnuri religioase, pot participa la discuții despre viață și credință prin radio și televiziune și pot de asemenea să consulte un preot prin scrisoare sau telefon. Peste toate acestea, *rețeaua Internet* adaugă acestor facilități de comunicare alte posibilități care nu necesită prezența în același loc, a comunicantului, sau primitorului de informații. Pot primi informații

fără să se întâlnească unii cu alții, fără ca primitorul informației să-l întâlnească pe cel ce comunică informația.

Internetul modifică granițele geografice și despășește limitele cadrului convențional. Acasă, nimeni nu știe că tu cauți informații despre o anumită religie sau serviciile unei Biserici confessionale. Oameni depărtați de religie, sau Biserică, pot intra în contact în mod anonim, cu lumea religiei. Acesta poate fi un prim pas spre spiritualizare, dacă este urmat de participarea la viața Bisericii.

Prin internet, mii de dioceze, parohii, înalți prelați și clerici de rând, pot fi conectați prin rețelele și resursele confessionale și inter-confessionale; prin internet poți găsi informații utile care pot afecta viața spirituală și morală a individului: istoria, organizarea și doctrina bisericilor, devoțiune și sanctitate (sacramente), studiu biblic, anunțuri comunitare, legături inter-confessionale, etc.

Dacă este folosit cu discernământ, internetul poate contribui la completarea cunoștințelor religioase ale unuia creștin matur și responsabil.

Toate religiile, inclusiv Biserica Romano-Catolică, Bisericile Ortodoxe, mai ales din America, și majoritatea Bisericilor Protestante, au sisteme informaționale, foarte profesioniste și serioase, pe rețeaua de internet.

Internetul fiind global, pentru inițierea cercetătorului, este nevoie de un *navigator specializat*, un *șofer calificat*. Un navigator care știe, ca și șoferul de taxi, destinația (adresantul), pe întregul glob, majoritatea *legăturilor* tuturor religiilor de Internet.

Cercetând multe situri de navigatori, în explorarea *pânzei de păianjen "web"*, am găsit un navigator specializat în malerie, *Yomee.com*, ce merită a fi folosit. *Yomee.com* vă poate iniția, rapid și sistematic, în procesul de găsire, și conectare, cu marea majoritate a siturilor religiilor majore din întreaga lume. Prin *Yomee.com*, se pot accesa multe informații și legături cu majoritatea Bisericilor Ortodoxe. Acest "search engine" de religii, anticipează a transmite, în viitorul apropiat SLUJBE RELIGIOASE ÎN DIRECT.

Navigatorul Yomee.com, lucrează la programe de estompare (blocare) a *siturilor* indecente, și a materialelor nedorite (inclusiv junk-mail-ul), care adresa ne agasează când folosim Internetul. Considerând principiile de reprezentare, și linia valorilor sale coordonatoare, recomandăm *Navigatorul Yomee.com*, cititorilor revistei noastre. Adresa URL = <http://www.yomee.com>. ❀

Protopop Constantin Alecse

PROTOPOPIATUL CANADEI DE EST LA ÎNCEPUTUL MILENIULUI III

Protopopiatul Canadei de Est și-a început activitatea la 1 Noiembrie 1998 prin numirea în această funcție a subsemnatului, Pr. Dumitru Păun de la Misiunea Ortodoxă Română din London, ON, Canada, zi în care credincioșii Români din acest minunat oraș trăiau intens bucuria sfințirii propriei lor biserici, împlinindu-se astfel visul lor de mai bine de 10 ani.

Ca protopop, prima vizită am efectuat-o la 12 Decembrie 1998 în zona Niagara, unde am întâlnit o mulțime de Români adunați pentru petrecerea Crăciunului. Cu această ocazie s-au purtat discuții cu privire la înființarea unei noi misiuni în această zonă, idee ce rămâne în discuție pentru viitor.

Anul 1999 a debutat cu Conferința Protopopească organizată în zilele de 26-28 Februarie la London, la care au participat: Pr. Prof. Dr. Cezar Vasiliu din Montreal, Pr. Gabriel Curpene din Ottawa, Pr. Nicolae Zelea din Hamilton, Dn. Ionel Cudrîtescu din Toronto, Pr. Daniel Nenson, Protopop al Canadei de Vest din Regina, Saskatchewan și Pr. Dumitru Paun, Protopop al Canadei de Est din London, Ontario. Succesul Conferinței a fost îmbogățit prin participarea fraților Ortodocși Greci, Sârbi și Ucrainieni, preoți și mireni, la Slujba Vecerniei de sâmbătă seara, cu ocazia Duminicii Ortodoxiei și încheiată cu o agapă frățască.

La numai o săptămână după Praznicul Învierii Domnului, Protopopiatul Canadei de Est a avut bucuria de a primi vizita întâi Stătătorului său, I.P.S. Arhiepiscop Nathaniel, însoțit de P.C. Pr. Constantin Tofan, Protopopul Departamentului "Misiuni." Vizita a început la **Misiunea Sf. Cruce din London** cu Slujba Parastasului în memoria părinților ctitorilor bisericii noastre, iar după servirea mesei, Înalt Prea Sfințitul s-a întâlnit cu un grup de credincioși veniți special pentru a onora prezența Înaltului Oaspete. Vizita a continuat la **Misiunea Sf. Nicolae din Ottawa** unde un alt grup impresionant de credincioși a asistat la Sf. Liturghie Arhierască urmată de Banchetul organizat cu prilejul aniversării a 10 ani de la constituirea acestei misiuni, păstorită de Pr. Gabriel Curpene. Vizita a continuat la **Misiunea Sf. Nicolae din Montreal**, misiune condusă de Pr. Prof. Dr. Cezar Vasiliu. Prezența la Sf. Liturghie a unui număr așa de mare de creștini din toate cele trei parohii românești a demonstrat forța de unire a Românilor, atunci când vorbim de credință, tradiție și limbă, iar prezența grupului de copii îmbrăcați în costume populare, care au recitat și cântat în dulcele grai românesc, au impresionat până la lacrimi pe cei prezenți la banchet.

În luna iunie am însoțit pe I.P.S. Arhiepiscop Nathaniel la **Parohia Sf. Ioan Botezătorul din Kitchener**, parohie de harnici bănăteni plini de omenie și cu vechi tradiții pe acest pământ. La sărbătoarea aniversării a peste 30 de ani de existență a parohiei s-a adăugat și aniversarea a 25 de ani de căsătorie a Familiei Pr. Dumitru Ichim și doamnei Preotease Florica Batu Ichim, sărbătoriți așa cum se cuvine de enoriași.

Luna septembrie a adus odată cu venirea toamnei vizita I.P.S. Iosif, Arhiepiscop al Parisului, prezent la London la Slujba Vecerniei, cu ocazia adăugării a încă unui an de existență a misiunii noastre, vizită ce s-a continuat la Bisericile din Kitchener și Toronto-Sf. Gheorghe unde, de asemenea, s-a oficiat Slujba Vecerniei.

Protopopiatul nostru a trăit recent, intens și plăcut înființarea **Misiunii Sf. Ioan Evanghelistul din Toronto**, pastorită de Pr. Ionel Cudrîtescu, proaspăt purtător al Tainei Preoției. Misiunea și-a deschis oficial activitatea la 12 Decembrie 1999 cu prima Sf. Liturghie la care au participat un sobor de preoți și un număr mare de credincioși veniți de pretutindeni. Această misiune cât și alte două, aparținând de Eparhia Soră a I.P.S. Victorin, tot recent înființate, se află ca și **Parohia Sf. Gheorghe în Toronto**. Parohia Sf. Gheorghe păstorită de Pr. Ioan Bunea, rămâne vechi și puternic Centru al Ortodoxiei Românești unde, de curând, au fost încheiate pictura interioară a Bisericii și lucrările de modernizare a Sălii Sociale.

În cadrul evenimentelor importante mai putem aminti vizitele la London a domnului Gabriel Gafița, Ambasadorul Romaniei la Ottawa, a scriitorului vâlcean, d-l profesor Ion Barbu la London și Montreal unde și-a lansat cartea "Vatra Românească sub Trei Episcopi" și a temerarului Stoica Vasile care, în scaunul lui cu rotile, a făcut Turul Lumii, în încercarea de a colecta fonduri pentru Asociația persoanelor cu handicap din Romania.

Bucuria apropierii mării Sărbători a Nașterii Domnului nostru Iisus Hristos a fost pe deplin conturată și îmbogățită de remarcabilul Concert de Colinde și muzică religioasă susținut de Corul Axios, format din studenți ai Facultății de Teologie din București veniți "cu colindul" prin diferite parohii din S.U.A. și Canada.

Fie ca Mileniul III să aducă între preoții și credincioșii celor două Arhiepiscopii pacea, dragostea și unirea ce trebuie să caracterizeze Neamul nostru Românesc de pretutindeni. ✱

Preot Protopop Dumitru Păun

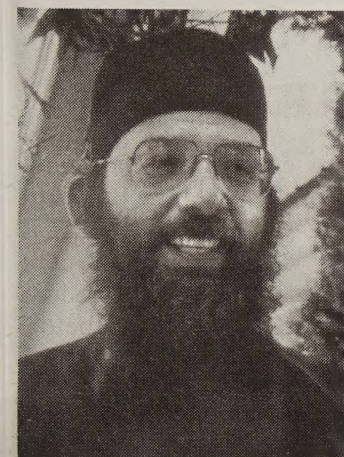
NOTA REDACȚIEI: "În Hristos nu mai este nici iudeu, nici elin nu mai este nici rob, nici liber, ci toți una suntem în Hristos Iisus." (Galateni 3, 28)

Poporul dreptcredincios recunoaște trăirea duhovnicească indiferent de limba pe care o vorbim și de națiunea căreia aparținem. Zeci de persoane au purtat dialog duhovnicesc cu Părintele Joseph Morris în România.

Publicăm în cele ce urmează un articol apărut în ziarul "Monitorul de Iași" despre Părintele Joseph Morris de la Parohia Română Ortodoxă "Sf. Împărați Constantin și Elena" din Indianapolis.

CUM SE CONVERTESC AMERICANII LA ORTODOXIE

Ieromonahul Joseph Morris slujește ca preot în parohia "Sfinții Constantin și Elena" din Indianapolis, aparținând Episcopiei Române Ortodoxe din America



**Ieromonah
Joseph Morris**

Părintele Joseph Morris a venit în România din Indianapolis (Indiana) pentru a se închina, pe 14 Octombrie, la moaștele Sfintei Cuvioase Parascheva. Convertit la Ortodoxie cu ani în urmă, părintele este acum parohul bisericii "Sf. Constantin și Elena," păstorind atât români stabiliți în S.U.A., cât și americani care s-au botezat în ritul creștin-ortodox. De altfel, cei mai mulți dintre enoriașii săi

sunt *convertiți*, creșterea numărului credincioșilor ortodocși fiind un fenomen valabil la nivelul întregului continent american. Lucru cu atât mai impresionant cu cât mass-media nu agreează deloc credința ortodoxă și-i face o proastă publicitate. Setea de divinitate, dorința de a cunoaște credința ortodoxă sunt însă destul de mari. "Este nevoie, după cum aprecia un preot american, de mulți misionari, foarte bine pregătiți și cu o viață morală ireproșabilă. Sunt numeroși cei care doresc să cunoască religia noastră, dar pe cei mai mulți nu are cine să-i îndrume. Secerișul e mult, ne mai trebuie secerători."

Trebuie Să Ai O Tărie De Mucenic

A fi ortodox într-o societate care cuprinde un amestec nemaîntâlnit de religii și grupări (pseudo) religioase nu este deloc ușor. Trebuie să ai o tărie de mucenic pentru a rezista și a-ți duce, fără compromisuri, crucea până la capăt. Viața într-o comunitate ortodoxă americană este marcată și de un *specific* anume. Aici credincioșii sunt răspândiți pe arii foarte largi, unii dintre ei fiind nevoiți să parcurgă, cu mașina, câteva ore de acasă până la biserică. Slujbele care au loc sunt întotdeauna însoțite de un *buletin parohial* în care sunt publicate predica zilei, programul pentru săptămâna următoare, dar și anunțuri de mică publicitate. În plus, spre deosebire de parohiile ortodoxe din Estul Europei, în S.U.A. credincioșii doresc să aibă un cuvânt mai greu de spus în privința problemelor parohiei. Deși

preotul este cel care conduce comunitatea, părerile enoriașilor contează foarte mult, ei fiind predispuși să adopte un stil mai democratic de conducere. Abilitatea de a face mici *concesii* (dar nu compromisuri pastorale) și *dialogul continuu* cu enoriașii sunt condițiile pe care trebuie să le îndeplinească un preot ortodox american.

Nu Există "Campanii De Recrutare"

Cum se face *misionarism ortodox* în Statele Unite și, în general, pe cele două continente americane? La această întrebare, sincer să fiu, mă așteptam ca Părintele Joseph să-mi creioneze o situație întrucâtva asemănătoare cu cea a minorităților religioase din țara noastră. M-am înșelat. Ortodocșii de dincolo de ocean nu sunt nici complexați de situația lor și nici nu și-au programat "*campanii de recrutare*" a unor noi membri. "Pentru ca cineva să se convertească la credința ortodoxă este nevoie, în primul rând, de două lucruri: de o biserică deschisă cât mai mult timp posibil și de o bună pregătire, din toate punctele de vedere, a celui care slujește la altar. Noi nu ieșim pe străzi pentru a aborda oamenii și nici nu batem la ușile lor. Pur și simplu ne îngrijim ca parohia noastră să aibă un număr de telefon trecut în cartea de telefoane a orașului respectiv, iar biserica să aibă, la intrare, o plăcuță pentru ca cei care trec pe acolo să știe ce se afla în respectivul lăcaș de cult. Aceasta este singura noastră reclamă. Cei care se convertesc sunt aduși de cei care frecventează deja biserica parohială sau vin pur și simplu din curiozitate în biserica noastră. Cu toți aceștia trebuie discutat, trebuie să li se explice, să li se dezvăluie cât mai pe înțelesul lor credința ortodoxă. Lucru destul de dificil, pentru că foarte mulți au o structură, o educație care le îngreunează corecta pătrundere a adevărilor de credință ortodoxe. Dincolo de toate aceste aspecte văzute mai este unul, esențial: Cel care îi aduce pe oameni la dreapta credință este Duhul Sfânt. Nu este meritul nici unui preot sau al unui enoriaș. Duhul Sfânt lucrează în inima și în sufletul aceluia om care dorește să se întâlnească cu Dumnezeu și îl aduce în biserică. Loc în care, pentru a desăvârși această lucrare, noi, preoții, trebuie să fim cât mai mult timp prezenți și să ne facem cât mai

Cont. pe pag. următoare

Cum se convertesc ...

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bine datoria."

Părintele Joseph consideră că este o mare diferență între comportamentul minorităților religioase din România și cel al ortodocșilor din S.U.A. "Neoprotestanții, îndeosebi, câștigă adepți folosindu-se de bunurile materiale. În plus, ei îl angoasează pe om cu întrebări de genul: «Ești mântuit?»: Or, în realitate, nimeni nu poate fi sigur că este mântuit; poți doar spera că vei fi mântuit. Mântuirea noastră depinde de Dumnezeu și nu de asigurările pe care le dă o sectă sau alta. O altă mare diferență este aceea că ei fac misionarism preponderent prin intermediul cuvintelor. Un ortodox înțelege să fie misionar prin întreaga sa viață, prin rugăciune și trăire creștină. E mult mai importantă puterea exemplului personal decât cea a unui discurs învățat și repetat mecanic. În Pateric se spune că la un mare duhovnic din pustie veneau mai mulți frați pentru a lua cuvinte de folos. Toți puneau întrebări și vorbeau cu marele pustnic, numai unul dintre ei nu zicea niciodată nimic. Atunci avva l-a întrebat: «Tu de ce nu mă întrebi niciodată nimic?». La care ucenicul a răspuns: «Îmi este de ajuns, părinte, să te privesc»."

Slujind În Pustie

Nu foarte vorbăreț, cu o seninătate pe care o descoperi doar la duhovnicii iscusiți ai mănăstirilor noastre. Părintele Joseph Morris mi-a confirmat, încă o dată, faptul că nu poți fi creștin decât într-un singur fel: slujind lui Dumnezeu și împlinind voile Sale; nici apartenența națională, nici societatea în care trăiești nu reprezintă o piedică pentru acest lucru. Pregătit pentru a purta o discuție cu un "preot modern, adaptat societății americane," am avut, în fapt, sansa nesperată de a putea asculta pe unul dintre Părinții iscusiți ai Ortodoxiei. Dacă mi-ar fi spus că vine din pustie, iar nu din mijlocul unui oraș american l-aș fi crezut.

După ce a slujit la catedrala mitropolitană, de sărbătoarea Cuvioasei Parascheva. Părintele Joseph a mers în pelerinaj la mănăstirile din Moldova: Sihăstria, Agapia etc. A fost impresionat de evlavia credincioșilor români și de viața duhovnicească din mănăstirile noastre, diferită de cea din mănăstirile grecești, care sunt ceva mai rigide în multe privințe. Din Iasi, o impresie deosebită i-a făcut biserica Mănăstirii Sfinții Trei Ierarhi. A plecat din țară cu speranța că, într-o bună zi, se va reîntoarce aici, în Grădina Maicii Domnului. Până atunci. Părintele Joseph va sluji, cu toate puterile sale, comunitatea ortodoxă de români și americani din Indianapolis, Statele Unite. Cu pustnicești daruri, într-un pustiu pe cale de a înverzi. *

Mihai Aparaschivei

(Monitorul de Iași, Noiembrie, 1999)

SCRISOARE DE MULȚUMIRE A PATRIARHULUI ROMÂNIEI

PATRIARHIA ROMÂNĂ

27 Aprilie 2000

Inalt Prea Sfinției Sale,
Inalt Prea Sfinției Arhiepiscop NATHANIEL,
Episcopia Ortodoxă Română din America

INALT PREA SFINȚIA VOASTRĂ,

Nu bucurăm că ați răspuns cu dragoste la apelul nostru de a susține Programul social de urgență "ÎMPREUNĂ CU SINISTRAȚII DE SFINTELE PAȘTI" în scopul ajutorării unui număr cât mai mare din cele circa 5,000 de familii ale căror case au fost distruse în totalitate sau grav avariate de furia apelor.

Am primit donația de 5000 \$ trimisă de Inalt Prea Sfinția Voastră, sumă ce se va alătura celei colectate de Patriarhia Română și de care vor beneficia, familiile care au suferit cele mai mari pierderi din parohiile identificate de ierarhii locurilor sinistrate.

Mulțumindu-Vă pentru donația făcută pentru ajutorarea sinistraților, Vă dorim Inalt Prea Sfinția Voastră, sănătate, roade îmbelșugate în ogorul misiunii pastorale și un Paști binecuvântat.

Cu frățească întru Hristos îmbrățișare, *

+ TEOCTIST

Patriarhul Bisericii Ortodoxe Române

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